

BIBLE HISTORY

[OLD TESTAMENT]

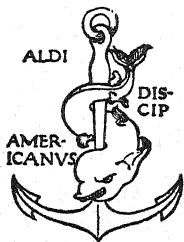
AFTER THE RESULTS OF HISTORICAL
CRITICISM

ARRANGED FOR STUDENTS
OF DIFFERENT AGES

BY

PASTOR X. KOENIG

Translated from the French by Mary Louise Hendee



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MCMV

BIBLE HISTORY

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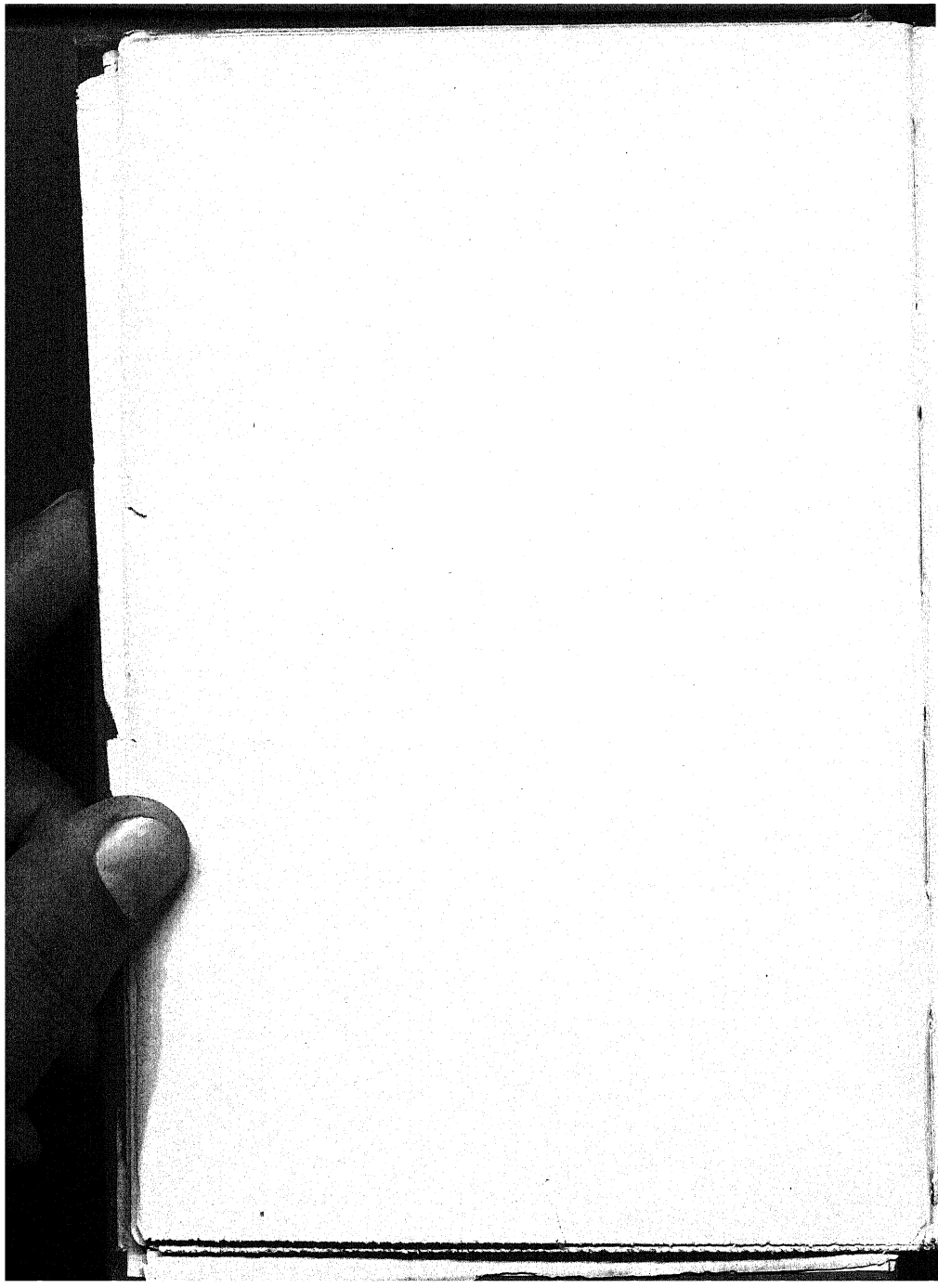
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To all those who love Jesus Christ, with pure and disinterested heart, I dedicate this book, the humble fruit of patient toil.

Thy kingdom come!

X. K.

INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

A condensation of the author's pamphlet on
Sincerity in the teaching of Bible History to Children.

The Bible is not what it should be to the Protestants of to-day; the Bible is no longer read, is no longer the book of the closet. Family worship has been almost abandoned, and the laity are too generally indifferent to the painful questions which for the last fifty years have been harassing the conscience of the clergy. And I am often dismayed at the thought of these things, for nothing can replace the Bible with Protestants. The Protestant is not really a Christian freed from the tyranny of extraneous authority, unless he draws from the very source of his freedom, the spiritual and moral strength that is the excuse for his being a Protestant at all. A Protestant without the Bible, is unarmed in the face of infidelity or superstition.

If the Protestantism of to-day is weak and disunited, it is because it no longer finds the Bible the great luminary that lighted our spiritual ancestors in their heroic and successful struggle against Rome. On the one hand,

an open-minded study of the Bible has been replaced by creeds and the abnormal development of ecclesiasticism; on the other hand, discouragement and indifference have allowed the Book to lose its influence in the home. From fear of science, ardent churchmen have put new chains on the Bible; from mental inactivity and want of fervour, the indifferent are disregarding it altogether. In either case, the Bible is a dead letter.

It is the aim of this little book, which we confidently offer to Bible students and teachers, to help restore the Bible to the unique place it ought to hold in every Protestant family; and it is also its aim to testify to the fact, that historical criticism, far from having "demolished" the Bible, has, by subjecting it to tests used in establishing the validity of other documents of antiquity, eliminated a great part of the difficulties it presents in the face of modern thought, and made it yield up more of its grandeur and significance, as the priceless document of the progressive revelation of God for the salvation of suffering man.

It is very true that a deplorable number of church members, estranged from this marvellous Book by the ironical criticism of sceptics like Voltaire, and the strictures of moral dogmatists, have come to see in it only a tissue of enigmas, impossible stories, and accounts of

life scandalously at variance with the most elementary modern notions of morality. The result is a very general neglect of the sacred writers, as well among the educated as among the ignorant, and we are forced to acknowledge that this is small wonder, when we consider the traditional conception of Bible history, presenting as it does the most extraordinary stories, and deeds shocking to the Christian conscience, as the word of God, and as food fit for the spiritual nurture of our children.

Scepticism has had an easy time of it on our own ground, for surely some of the Bible stories are not edifying and others are not probable. If we must teach our children as sacred history the failings of Abraham and the knavery of Jacob; if we must present as the word of God the massacres in the conquest of Canaan, the duplicities of David, and the stories of Jonah and Daniel; if the prophets are only wonder-workers, diviners and visionaries, and their preachings and prophecies are sibylline leaves, in truth we need not be troubled to understand the irony of unbelievers or the criticisms of the moralists. I am frank to say, that in spite of the passionate love I have for the Bible, if the old conception of it must still be accepted, if it should be demonstrated that the results of the research of over a century on the

part of independent scholars have no stable foundation, if it were necessary to go on teaching our children a history that is not a history, I should not hesitate a moment to renounce this teaching, which seems to me directly antagonistic to the most elementary conceptions of the probity and morality that our modern Christian conscience demands.

But happily we are not reduced to this grievous alternative. Thanks to the indefatigable labours of unselfish and heroic scholars — for they have had to contend with the whole body of ignorance and fanaticism — thanks to the toil of generations of critics, who have studied this book, the Bible, as no other book has ever been studied, and have accumulated mountains of observations, we have arrived at a really historical conception of the Old Testament, strongly intrenched behind an admirable criticism of original texts, and are able to see the history of the Israelites unroll before our eyes in a clear and rational manner.

Out of the nebulosity of their origins, emerges little by little a people from whose heart spring extraordinary men, the prophets. The mission of these men is to tear the nation away from idolatry and formalism, to scatter the darkness and point to the coming of the great light. They are the nucleus, the centre; the whole history of

Israel converges round them; they are the flower of the Hebrew people, its soul, its heart, not to be dismissed in a line or two, as too often they have been, in sacred histories of the past. "The Prophets before the Law, the Psalms after both," runs the celebrated saying of Reuss. We might paraphrase this and say that in the old conception the prophets were nothing, in the new they are everything. In the beginning, with Moses, while history is still clouded with legend, prophecy first appears. As we advance, and the scriptural documents belong more nearly to the epoch of which they treat, we find ourselves on ground increasingly firm, over which we are lead from epoch to epoch by the voices of the prophets Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, as they draw the people of God away from their gross primitive nationalism, purifying their religious feeling, and guiding them toward religious conceptions that are more spiritual, more universal, holier. God seems to have stooped to the level of man, as the father in his love stoops to the level of his child, and to have disclosed Himself, "unmasked" Himself, little by little. The prophets, incorruptible preachers of Justice and Holiness, were truly educators of the people and ambassadors of God, the bearers of the tidings of freedom; but when they saw that the people hardened their hearts and sought safety away

from Jehovah, they announced with increasing authority that the nation would be destroyed, in order that the Idea might be saved. And in their sublime visions of the future, in those splendid outbursts that disclose what are termed the messianic ideas of the prophets, they see — through a glass, darkly, if you will, but they see — the Church of the future, wherein all men, moved by one passion, one impulse, shall realize God's plan in justice and love.

Is it not a thrilling story, compelling in its truthfulness, opening splendid vistas? Here are the people, stiff-necked and blind; here are their kings, trying to copy the civilization of the great empires around them that are founded in falsehood and violence; here are the priests, believing that they have the monopoly of religion, and sacrificing the spirit and the life to ritual and dogma, and like the priest of Bethel in the face of Amos, like the Deuteronomist before Jeremiah, trying to arrest the irresistible current that has its source in God; and here are the prophets, now denouncing, now consoling the people, opposing the spirit to form, life to the letter, progress to reaction! Where in the world do we find anything more tragical, anything more vital?

All this these modern scholars have disclosed to us. By an irreproachable method, they have given us, not

a *new* historical conception of the Sacred History — for there was no historical conception of the history of Israel before, only the traditions of the ages,— but *the* historical conception of the Old Testament.

This reconstruction of the history of the Israelites, and the consequent transformation of Sacred History,— that is, the history of the preparation for the good tidings of the kingdom of God, running through the formal history of the nation — has had results altogether unforeseen, and so much the more remarkable in that they were not anticipated. Apologetics has found in this new conception a two-edged sword; the weapons of Voltaire and his followers have been rendered harmless, and the moral dogmatist must now change his arguments. Formerly apologetics was powerless against these enemies; but to-day our faith in Christ, the Saviour, is rooted in such ground, our position is so unassailable, that we have nothing more to fear from the attacks to which the Bible was open when considered as a book fallen from the sky. The moment the Bible is a veritable history, the moment we recognize a development in it, sincerity forbids us to judge the different degrees of this development for anything save what they are. We recognize the fact that there are myths and legends in the Bible, and we do not fear to acknowledge that it is

sometimes difficult, if not impossible, to disengage the true history from the legends in which it is buried. Before this frank avowal, Voltaire is disarmed.

To the moral dogmatist, who judges the narratives and teachings of the Old Testament by modern standards, it is easy to reply, that we no longer look upon the Bible as a homogeneous whole, in which all texts are of equal value, whether they come from the Hexateuch, The Song of Solomon, or the Apocalypse. We now see in the Bible history, periods succeeding one another, and transformations going on; and in these transformations we find a progress in moral and religious conceptions. When we speak of progress, we speak of change from the lower to the higher, from the imperfect toward the perfect. The attentive observer perceives, that in His revelation of Himself, God has stooped to the level of man in order to teach him, disclosing Himself gradually, as man was able to bear it. There is evolution in the formation of the idea of the kingdom of God; there are periods of preparation and periods of accomplishment, a transformation of customs and notions, a gradual perfecting of the moral code, and to the attitude of a David and that of a John the Baptist, the same critique may not be applied. The men of God did not learn the truth at one stroke; no one any longer believes that God created the

world in that way. The law of duty is eternal, as God its author is eternal, but the fashion of understanding duty has varied, and the conception of it has grown higher and purer. Elijah believed he was accomplishing the will of God by the massacre of the priests of Baal; Jesus said, thou shalt not even hate thy brother. We do not look upon Calvin as an unmitigated scoundrel, because he did not have our own tolerant ideas of liberty of conscience. Let us judge epochs and men according to the light they have had; it is the only way of being honest and just with them. The moralist, if he be not rooted in prejudice, ought to render up his arms to this reasoning.

We have, then, freed the Bible from one of the gravest accusations ever brought against it, the reproach of immorality. The Bible of plenary inspiration could scarcely escape this charge; but the real Bible, as we now understand it, is in no wise open to it; it would be entirely absurd to condemn David for lacking the purity and sanctity of Saint Paul. It is not difficult to distinguish what is transitory and incidental in the teaching or the conduct of the different men of God, from what is divine and permanent. To do this is one mission of historical criticism.

We spoke just now of legends and myths in the Bible. The first result of modern Biblical research was the as-

signing to their proper places of what is mythical in the Bible and what is historical. Let us ask ourselves what we understand by the words *legend* and *history*.

Legend is not fable; when we say that a narrative is legendary, we do not mean that it is all fiction; it may be all fact. What we mean is that it has come down to us only in documents of very much later date than its occurrence. Legend may be highly edifying, it may have a moral and pedagogical value beyond that of a well authenticated historic fact; but legend is legend, and we should have the courage to face calmly the truth that there are legends in the Bible.

The narratives of the lives of the patriarchs, to cite no others, are, from the very fact of their place in the sacred books absolutely legendary; but do Abraham's faith and Jacob's trust, and the beauty of their character as men of God and revealers of Yahweh, stand forth any the less vividly from the inspired pages on that account? Are the parables of Jesus less beautiful and less fitted to mould Christian character, because they are known to be pure fiction? Let us render to legend what belongs to legend, and to history what belongs to history.

Let us recapitulate the history of Israel, as it is in the conception of historical criticism. It begins with a period

of obscurity; then, from Abraham to Moses, we have legendary narratives resting on old traditions that were handed down from age to age, by word of mouth, among the nomadic tribes of Israelites. Then come Moses and the judges, filling a rich and important period of formation and organization, of wars and conquests, the epic period of Israel. Now follow in order the kings and the prophets, the material downfall of the nation, its restoration, and the expansion of its religious life. At length Jesus comes, the expected of nations, Restorer and Saviour, the consummation of the long evolution, the one perfect manifestation of Divinity in this suffering world.

It remains to determine how these results of modern criticism, which seems to us to have been permanently and scientifically established, should be presented to young people; for it is intolerable to suppose that we have reached a point where what is true for theologians is not true for our children. We cannot admit that there may be two Bibles, one for the learned and one for the ignorant; that there is in Protestantism a sort of esoteric doctrine, fit for the initiated but forbidden to the crowd. Protestantism has never feared to communicate to the people what she has considered to be the truth; if the truth was the great liberator in the be-

ginning, it must be so to-day, and will be so as long as the world lasts. God has no need of our reticence; if we would save the faith, we must do it through sincerity.

We are all really in accord on this point; but what method is to be followed? We answer, the one that is most direct.

It is not from curiosity that we study the history of the Hebrew religion, as we might study the religion of the ancient Peruvians. We believe that God revealed Himself especially to this peculiar people, that they were commissioned to teach the world that the *summum bonum* lies in a conscience transformed by the most intense and vital religious sentiments. This truth is Israel's gift to the world, and it is her glory that she prepared the way for the coming of Christ Jesus. And since Jesus is the consummation of this marvellous history, we may look at it all as illumined in retrospect by "the light that lighteth every man coming into the world."

"Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of God and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe in the gospel." The kingdom of God is the theme of the gospel He preached, it is what He commanded His disciples to preach; it is what they did preach. Thus, according to Jesus and the earliest Christians, the evangelical mes-

sage is the preaching of the kingdom, and man's highest quest is the quest of the kingdom.

The foundation of the kingdom of God, a knowledge of the conditions of entrance into this kingdom, and the privileges that entrance into it confers upon the faithful — this should be the subject of all Christian religious education. We are to mould character in view of the kingdom, prepare youth to become its citizens. The sacred history of Israel is nothing else than the history of the gradual preparation for the preaching of the kingdom of God; it is in this light that we should teach Old Testament History to our children.

If the old conception of the Bible as an absolutely miraculous history, in which everything from the first chapter of Genesis to the last line of the Apocalypse has the same weight, is to give place to a conception of it as history in the sense of a series of events undeniably progressive if the history of the people of God shows a true evolution, manifesting the slow redemptive action of God, as He gradually reveals Himself to man, that man may be drawn away from animality, purified, sanctified, and finally made fit for God's "*chef-d'œuvre*," His final revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ, the normal man, who gives us in His life, death, and resurrection, the measure of God's infinite compassion toward us, — if

these things are so — and for my part I am absolutely convinced that they are — why do we hesitate longer to instruct our children in the truth, and to restore to our people, who have so nearly abandoned it, the Bible rejuvenated?

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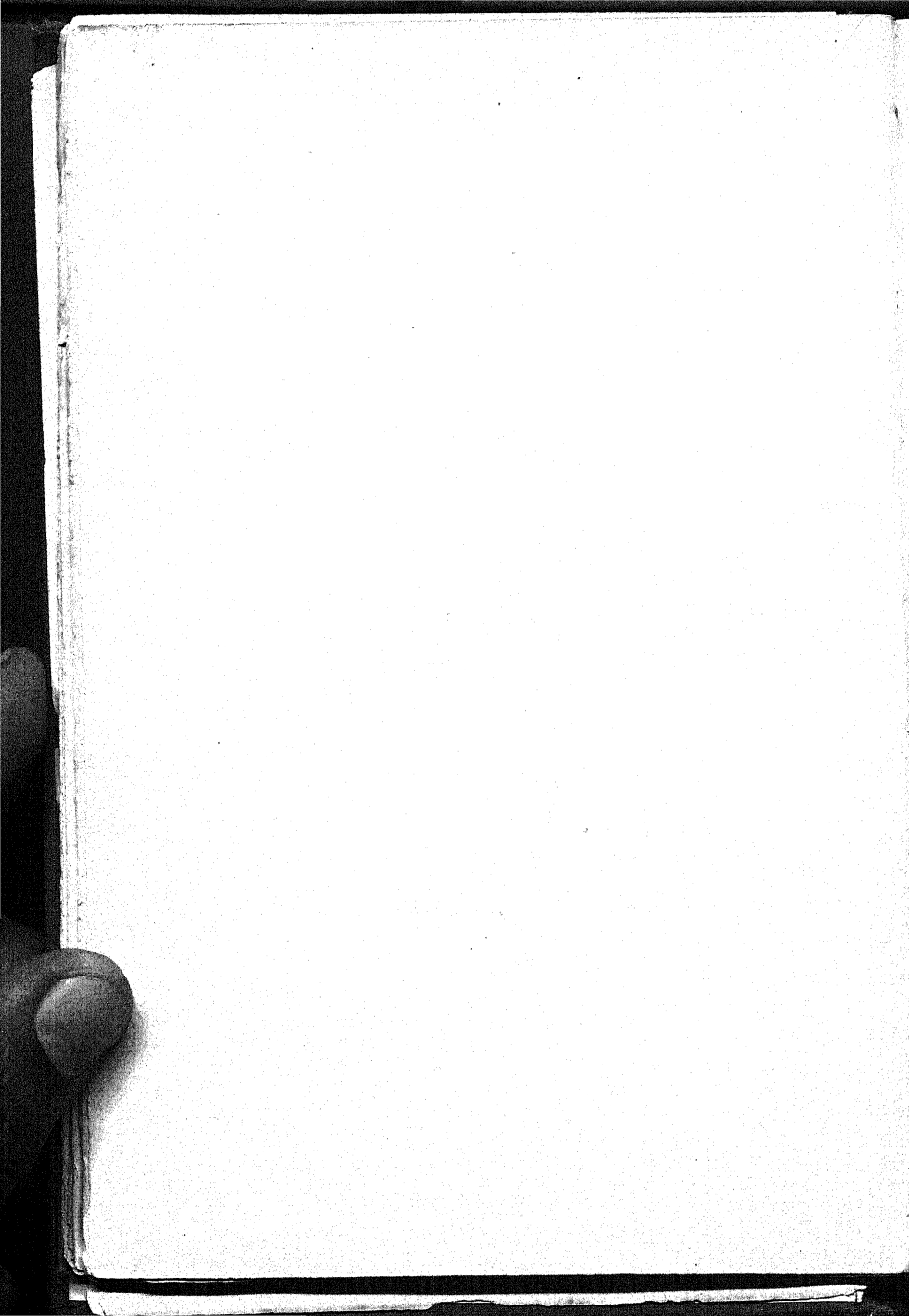


TABLE OF SYNCHRONISMS

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B. C.	ISRAEL	EGYPT	BABYLONIA AND ASSYRIA
4000			
2350	Immigration of Abraham into the land of Canaan.	High antiquity of Egyptian civilization. Menes, first known king.	Babylonian kingdoms flourishing. Capital cities: Akkad, Larsa, etc. King Hammurabi unites the different kingdoms and forms the Babylonian empire. Abraham leaves Chaldea.
2000	High civilization in Syria and Palestine, under influence of Egypt and Chaldea.	Invasion and rule (for two centuries) of the Hyksos.	
1400	Letters of the petty Palestine princes. Discovered at Tel-el-Amarna, in Egypt.	Ramses II, oppressor of the Israelites. Pharaoh Menephtah.	
1350			
1300	Moses delivers the people of Israel from bondage. He reforms his people and makes alliance with Yahweh on Sinai.		

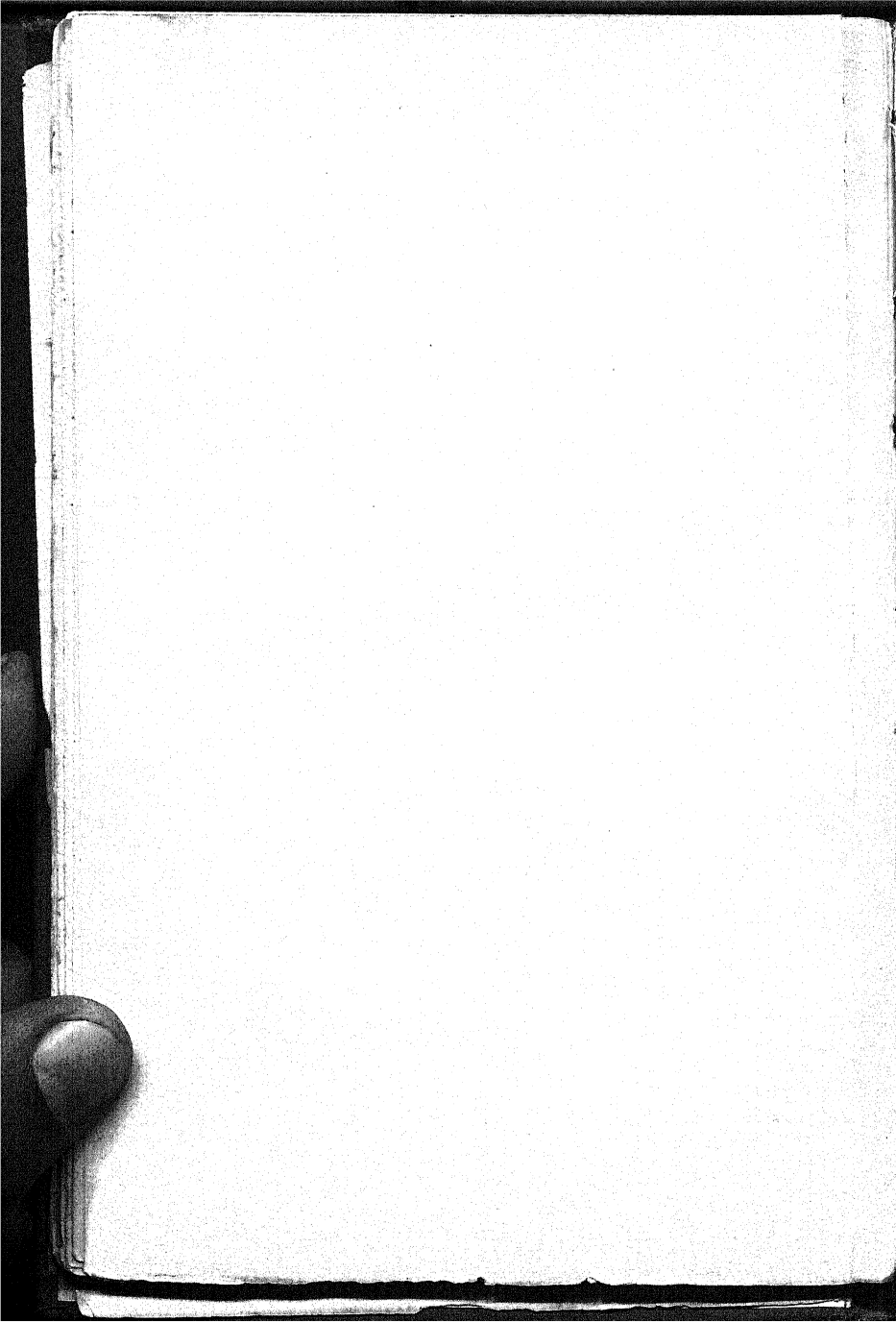
1250	Sisera vanquished by Deborah.		
1020	Song of Deborah.		
1020	Saul, son of Kish, anointed king of Israel by Samuel.		
1000	David, king of Israel.		
970	Solomon.		
933	Division of the kingdom.		
870	Ahab and Elijah.		
850	The Jahvist document.		
800	The Elohist document.		
760	The prophet Amos.		
730	Ahaz and Isaiah.		
722	Capture of Samaria by Sargon.		
777-699	Hezekiah, king of Judah. Isaiah and Micah.	Shishak (960-939).	Ashurnasirpal (885-860). Shalmaneser IV (724). Sargon (722-704).
640	Josiah, king of Judah.		703-681. Sennacherib, king of Assyria.
628	Call of Jeremiah.		681. Sennacherib assassinated by his sons.
621	Discovery of Deuteronomy. Josiah's Reformation.		
609	Death of Josiah at Megiddo. Activity of Jeremiah under Jehoiachim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah.	Pharaoh-necoh defeats and kills Josiah. He is defeated by Nebuchadnezzar at Carchemish.	

TABLE OF SYNCHRONISMS—Continued.

B. C.	ISRAEL.	EGYPT.	BABYLONIA AND ASSYRIA
586	Capture of Jerusalem (under Zedekiah) by Nebuchadnezzar.		555-539. Nabonidus, last king of Chaldea.
538	Edict of Cyrus, permitting the Jews to re-enter Palestine. Zerubbabel.		Cyrus, king of Persia and Babylon.
516 500	Dedication of the second Temple. Editing of the Priests' Code.		485-465. Xerxes.
			GREECE.
458	Ezra the scribe. Mixed marriages. Ruth.		490. Battle of Marathon.
444	Reform under Ezra and Nehemiah. Public reading of the law brought by Ezra from Babylon. Feast of Tabernacles.		480. Battle of Salamis.

323		435-400. High civilization in Greece. Literature, philosophy, art. Alexander the Great dies at Babylon.	
312	Beginning of dynasty of Seleucidae in Syria.	Ptolemy Lagi founds, at Alexandria, the dynasty of the Ptolemies.	
284		Ptolemy Philadelphus begins the Septuagint.	
175	Antiochus IV attempts to Hellenize the Jews by force.		280. The Gauls invade Greece.
167	Mattathias rebels and begins war of independence.		
164	The book of Daniel.		

PART ONE
THE ORIGINS



FIRST SECTION

TRADITIONAL PERIOD

LESSON I

ORIGIN OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD (About 2350 B.C.)

The Righteous shall live by faith. (Romans 1, 17)

1. Every people has its traditions, which have been handed down from generation to generation, and which trace back its origin to remarkable men, heroes, who had the gift of being truly the interpreters of divinity, and of making men listen to their words.

2. Abraham appears in the traditions of God's people, as a spiritual figure in the midst of idolators.

3. Abraham has great faith. Although everything seems to be against it, he obeys the voice of God, of the one true God, who speaks directly to man's conscience.

4. Abraham, father of the people of Israel, is the father of all believers.

NOTES

1. The Greeks and the Romans had their legendary heroes, handed down by tradition as superhumanly great. These heroes incarnate the dawning nation,

whose appearance is only to be explained through the initiative of men of great intellect and strong will. In nature, something never comes from nothing, and in nations the same law holds; and just as the seed which is to give birth to a tree, is practically lost in the matter necessary for the unfolding of the bud, so these vigorous personalities of the far past are almost lost in the popular traditions that have preserved their names and recounted their deeds. Among the Greeks, Hercules, Achilles, Ulysses; among the Romans, Romulus and Remus, nourished by the wolf, are the fathers of powerful nations and varied civilizations.

2. Abraham, according to tradition — a tradition which probably was not fixed in writing until toward the ninth century B.C. — is the father of the people of Israel. He appears to us as a luminous figure in that far and dim past.

QUESTIONS.— *What does tradition tell us of the origin of nations? — What do you know about the heroes or demi-gods of the Greeks and Romans? — Did the people of Israel also have traditions? — Who was Abraham?*

LESSON II

THE CALL OF ABRAHAM — ABRAHAM THE FATHER OF A
GREAT NATION, AND THE FOUNDER OF SPIRITUAL
RELIGION

In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.
(Genesis 12, 3)

1. Abraham, father of the faithful, is perfectly obedient to the will of God.

2. Out of Chaldea, at that time rich and very powerful, a well organized but an idolatrous nation, it was God's will that Abraham should go. Abraham would take old traditions with him, and hand them down to the nation whose father he was to become. The powerful Empires of Chaldea were to decline and fall, and all their learning, buried under mountains of sand, would be made known to us only after laborious research. But the name of Abraham would remain known, when the names of the most powerful of his people had been long forgotten.

4. And Abraham would become the father of another great people, that should be a witness to the one God who reveals himself to men and wishes to save them. One day, from among this people, Jesus Christ was to be born.

NOTES

1. The epoch of Abraham — that is to say, about the middle of the twenty-fourth century B.C. — was remarkable for its wealth and its high civilization. Until recent years, little was known of these distant ages; but to-day, thanks to the research of scientists, all this old world has come forth out of the sands of the desert. Tablets have been found, on which historic narratives and legends are engraved in strange characters (the Cuneiform writing), and we can very well represent to ourselves the state of civilization and the belief of the ancient Chaldeans. Throughout the history of the Israelites, we shall find an echo of these Chaldean myths and legends. Abra-

ham could scarcely fail to take away with him some of the intellectual and religious treasure of his native land.

2. In these documents of which we have been speaking, we find the patriarch's name written in two fashions: *Abram* and *Abraham*, and though many explanations of the difference have been offered, none of them is at all decisive. The form *Abram* is perhaps the older, as being more in conformity with the genius of the Assyro-Babylonian tongues.

BIBLE PASSAGE

[This passage — *Genesis* 12, 1-4, 6-9 — is a part of one of the most ancient written documents of the Pentateuch, the *Jahvist*, so called because in it God is always called JAHVEH* (pronounced and better written YAHWEH). The Jahvist document, in its present form, was probably edited during the ninth century B.C.]

Now Jehovah said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed. So Abram went, as Jehovah had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Shechem, unto the oak of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. And Jehovah appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land:

* YAHWEH, or JAHVEH, the Hebrew word JHVH, which our Bibles translate THE LORD, or JEHOVAH, is the name of God peculiar to the Hebrews, but a word held so sacred that they were forbidden to speak it, and wherever it occurred in their writings, ADONAI (the Lord) was pronounced instead. It was long thought that the name itself should be pronounced JEHOVAH, and in this form it has been retained in the American Edition.

and there builded he an altar unto Jehovah, who appeared unto him. And he removed from thence unto the mountain on the east of Beth-el, and pitched his tent, having Beth-el on the west, and Ai on the east; and there he builded an altar unto Jehovah, and called upon the name of Jehovah. And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the South.

QUESTIONS. — *What is Abraham sometimes called? Why is he called Father of the faithful? — What was his native country? — Was it rich and civilized? — Were not the Chaldeans idolators? — In course of time, who was to be born among the people of Father Abraham?*

LESSON III

PIETY AND FIDELITY OF ABRAHAM — THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC

God did prove Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham; and he said, Here am I. (Genesis 22, 1)

1. Abraham, full of reverence for the religion of his fathers, carried obedience even to the point of being ready to sacrifice to his divinity his only son Isaac.

2. The object of this barbarous practice, which we find among all early nations, was to render the divinity favourable. Sinful men thought to free themselves from the consequences of their sins, by offering as a sacrifice whatever was dearest to them.

3. But man's conscience, developing through God's aid, brought him to see that God does not desire bloody

sacrifices. What He asks is the sacrifice of our sinful hearts.

4. It was God himself, speaking to Abraham's conscience, that stayed his arm at the moment of the sacrifice. On that day, in spite of its many later falls, humanity drew nearer to God, and religion made a great advance toward spirituality.

NOTE

Human sacrifice was a part of all early religions. The Phoenicians and the Carthaginians had a god Moloch, to whom, at critical moments, they offered their first-born sons. The Druids of France and England sacrificed human lives. We believe it safe to say that a clear consciousness of the barbarity of such a custom was first manifest among the Israelites. The story of the sacrifice of Isaac, the earliest that Israel's legendary history has handed down to us, is perhaps the historic trace of this change in the religious consciousness of man. The rite of circumcision came to take the place of human sacrifice. The prophets, much later on, and finally Jesus Christ, were to teach us that the sole sacrifice God requires of us is the sacrifice of a bad conscience.

BIBLE PASSAGE

The Sacrifice of Isaac

(This story, Genesis 22, 1-14, 19, is a part of the *Elohist* document, so named because in it God is called *Elohim*. This document is very nearly contemporary with the *Jahvist*. The *Jahvist* was probably written,

under prophetic inspiration, in the Kingdom of Judah; the *Elohist*, at about the same time, in the kingdom of the north.)

And it came to pass after these things, that God did prove Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham; and he said, Here am I. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. And Abraham rose early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he clave the wood for the burnt-offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship, and come again to you. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took in his hand the fire and the knife; and they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold, the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering? And Abraham said, God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt-offering, my son; so they went both of them together.

And they came to the place which God had told him of: and Abraham built the altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of Jehovah called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, behind

him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son. . . . So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beer-sheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beer-sheba.

QUESTIONS. — *How did Abraham show his obedience? — What does the sacrifice of Isaac signify? — What is the meaning of God's forbidding the sacrifice?*

LESSON IV

JACOB

Thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of Jehovah. (Deut. 6, 18)

1. The story of Jacob is to be looked at from two points of view.
2. At first, Jacob is unprincipled, unscrupulous; he obtains a blessing by deceit, and grows rich through more or less dishonest methods.
3. But the spirit of God is at work in Jacob's sinful heart. There is a struggle between God and Jacob, and Jacob is not satisfied until God has blessed him and purified him.
4. This story is like a symbol of the whole religious development of the children of Israel, who wrestled with God, and at last gave to the world the perfect revelation of God in Christ Jesus, though not without backslidings and many, many trials.

NOTE

A careful reading of the story of Jacob, which is made up by the juxtaposition of old traditions from both the Jahvist and Elohist documents, gives us a not very flattering portrait of him, but, as with many Bible stories, there comes out of it a very clear impression that this sinful man, through a vital inner struggle, succeeds in overcoming the instincts of his wicked heart; and from a deceiver and an impostor (the name Jacob comes from a verbal root meaning to supplant, to deceive), he becomes the wrestler with God and for God. Jacob then takes the name of Israel. Just so the people of Israel first appear as separated from God by sin and wickedness, and nothing seems to point out the race as destined to be the messenger of God, the bearer of the Revelation of God. But after great trials, and wanderings and servitude, this people, too, at last turned to God, and He has manifested through them His power and His grace.

BIBLE PASSAGES

(The first passage, *Genesis* 28, 10-22, is composed of combined fragments from the Jahvist and the Elohist documents.)

And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took one of the stones of the place, and put it under his head, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed; and, behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, Jehovah stood above it, and said, I am Jehovah, the God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou

liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely Jehovah is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Beth-el *: but the name of the city was Luz at the first. And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, and Jehovah will be my God, then this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

(The second passage is taken from the Jahvist, *Genesis* 32, 24-32.)

And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was strained, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel †: for thou hast

* BETH-EL signifies HOUSE OF GOD.

† ISRAEL is derived from two words signifying to STRUGGLE WITH GOD.

striven with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel:* for, *said he*, I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. And the sun rose upon him as he passed over Peniel, and he limped upon his thigh.

QUESTIONS. — *Why is the story of Jacob good for us to think about? — What does the name Jacob mean? — After Jacob wrestled with God, what was he called? — What does the word Israel mean? — Of what is Jacob the type?*

LESSON V

JOSEPH

And God sent me before you . . . to save you alive by a great deliverance. (Genesis 45, 7.)

1. Of the sons of Jacob, the noble-hearted Joseph, for his piety and his wisdom, holds a place of honour among the great servants of God.

2. A victim of the hatred of his brothers, he is sold to some Bedouins who are on their way to Egypt, and who in turn give him into the hands of Potipher, an officer of the Egyptian Pharaoh (or king).

3. Joseph rouses the ill-will of his master's wife, and is thrown into prison; but his fidelity and his wisdom at last become known, and in a great crisis he is made the king's chief minister.

* PENIEL MEANS GOD'S FACE.

4. He saves Egypt from a threatened famine, and at the same time saves his unworthy brothers, who have come to Egypt in search of corn. After pardoning them, he establishes them, together with his old father, Jacob, in the most fertile of the lands of lower Egypt, where in time they become a numerous people.

NOTE

The story of Joseph is a pearl of great price among the treasures accumulated throughout the ages; and though it is difficult for us to give it a place in history, it has such freshness, such ingenuousness, and is so full of human feeling, that it has much more of the appearance of truth than many an undoubted historic narrative. Besides, what does it matter, whether all the details of the story are rigorously exact? It is curious that no Egyptian monument makes the slightest reference to this story, but if we remember the nature of the epoch to which it is supposed to belong — an epoch of war and famine, of political and economical crises — and if we keep in mind the fact that the great revolutionary conquest of the Hyksos, extending over a very considerable period of time, dried up the sources, as it were, of all artistic and literary production (for monuments are rare, and according to Manetho the information given us by Josephus relates to a much later period), this silence should not astonish us too much. Whether historic or not, the adventures of Joseph, his misfortunes and his deliverance, his uprightness, his piety and his humanity, will always remain one of the best read pages of religious literature. Whatever the particular facts

may be, it is well to remember that the favourite son of Jacob was guarded by Providence, and that his life was abundantly blessed, because he was strong in hours of temptation, following God without fear in the face of solicitations to sin.

BIBLE PASSAGES

1. *Joseph sold by his brethren.* (This story, Genesis 37, 3-5, 12-15, 18, 21, 23, 24-28, 31-34, is taken from the Jahvist document.)

Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a coat of many colours. And his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren; and they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it to his brethren, and they hated him yet the more. And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: for, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves came round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf. And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words. And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it to his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed yet a dream; and, behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars made obeisance to me. And he told it to his father; and to his brethren; and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth? And his brethren envied him; but his father kept the saying in mind.

And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. And Israel said unto Joseph, Are not thy brethren feeding the

flock in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I. And he said to him, Go now, see whether it is well with thy brethren, and well with the flock; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron and he came to Shechem. And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou? And he said, I am seeking my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they are feeding *the flock*. And the man said, They are departed hence; for I heard them say Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan.

And they saw him afar off, and before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him. And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into one of the pits, and we will say An evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams. And Reuben heard it, and delivered him out of their hand, and said, Let us not take his life. And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood; cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, but lay no hand upon him: that he might deliver him out of their hand, to restore him to his father. And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stripped Joseph of his coat, the coat of many colors that was on him; and they took him, and cast him into the pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it.

And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a caravan of Ishmaelites was coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt. And Judah said unto his brethren What profit is it if we slay our brother and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother, our flesh. And his brethren hearkened unto him. And there passed by Midianites, merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of

the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. And they brought Joseph into Egypt.

And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes. And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go? And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a he-goat, and dipped the coat in the blood; and they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father, and said, This have we found: know now whether it is thy son's coat or not. And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt torn in pieces. And Jacob rent his garments, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down to Sheol to my son mourning. And his father wept for him.

2. Joseph makes himself known to his brethren.

Joseph has become all-powerful in Egypt. Hard-pressed by famine, the sons of Jacob go down to Egypt to buy corn. They do not recognize their brother, but Joseph recognizes them. He has already pardoned them, but he decides to test them and see if they remain as unfeeling as ever. He orders his own silver cup to be hidden in the corn sack of his young brother Benjamin, whom, in a previous interview, he had demanded that his elder brothers bring back with them. He proposes to keep this young brother with him, and send the others back to their father Jacob. Judah comes to the all-powerful Joseph, and begs him not to keep Benjamin.

(This passage — *Genesis* 44, 18-34; 45, 1-10 — is in great part taken from the Jahvist document. Six verses from chapter forty-five have alone borrowed somewhat from the Elohist (verses 3, 5-9).

Then Judah came near unto him, and said, Oh, my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant; for thou art even as Pharaoh. My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father, or a brother? And we said unto my lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother; and his father loveth him. And thou saidst unto thy servants, Bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him. And we said unto my lord, The lad cannot leave his father: for if he should leave his father, his father would die. And thou saidst unto thy servants, Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more. And it came to pass when we came up unto thy servant my father, we told him the words of my lord. And our father said, Go again, buy us a little food. And we said, We cannot go down: if our youngest brother be with us, then will we go down; for we may not see the man's face, except our youngest brother be with us. And thy servant my father said unto us, Ye know that my wife bare me two sons: and the one went out from me and I said, Surely he is torn in pieces; and I have not seen him since: and if ye take this one also from me, and harm befall him, ye will bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to Sheol. Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad is not with us; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life; it will come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not *with us*, that he will die: and thy servants will bring down the grey hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to Sheol. For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then shall I bear the blame to my father for ever. Now therefore, let thy servant, I pray thee, abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father, if the lad be not with me? lest I see the evil that shall come on my father.

Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that

stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians heard, and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence. And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. And now be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and there are yet five years, in which there shall be neither plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a remnant in the earth, and to save you alive by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and ruler over all the land of Egypt. Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not; and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast.

QUESTIONS. — *Whose son was Joseph? — Why were his brothers jealous of him? — What did they do to him? — Did they leave him to die in the pit? — To whom did they sell him? — What did he become in Egypt? — Did he pardon his brothers?*

SECOND SECTION

HEROIC PERIOD

LESSON VI

ISRAEL IN EGYPT

The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. (Exodus 1, 12)

1. The Israelites in Egypt became so numerous that the Egyptian Kings, forgetting what they owed to Joseph, drove them all back into the land of Goshen, and cruelly oppressed them.

2. The Israelites were reduced to the hardest kind of slavery. Under the blows of their taskmasters, they were forced to build those wonderful monuments which have been preserved even to our time.

3. As they did not die fast enough even then, it was decided — if we accept the oldest traditions of the People of Israel — that all boys born among the Israelites should be put to death.

NOTES

1. So long as the "Shepherd Kings," the Hyksos, ruled over the Israelites, the latter had no reason to be dissatisfied; but after about three centuries had passed,

the kings descended from the ancient Pharaohs, who had been dispossessed by the Semitic Hyksos, and had taken refuge in Upper Egypt, succeeded in expelling the usurpers. About the year 1700 B.C., the Pharaoh Ahmes, founder of the eighteenth dynasty, vanquished the Hyksos in a great battle, and drove them out of Egypt.

2. The Israelites were detested by the conquerors, because of their sympathy with the vanquished, who were of the same race as their own, and because they had become very numerous, forming a powerful and united people in the midst of the Egyptians. It was under the following dynasty, however, the nineteenth, that the oppression of the Israelites became intolerable. During the reign of Seti I and that of Ramses II — whose mummy was found in 1881, in perfect preservation — the Israelites were reduced to the rôle of convict-labourers. They were employed in building great storehouses for the Pharaohs, at Pithom and at Raamses. In 1883, the archaeologist, Naville, discovered the situation of Pithom, and found curious relics in the ruins of the ancient treasure city built by the Children of Israel.

BIBLE PASSAGE

The Sufferings of Israel in Egypt. (This passage — Exodus 1, 1-14, 22 — from the documentary point of view, may be divided as follows: Verses 1-7, 13-14, belong to the Priests' Code, a document edited under priestly influence, after the exile; verses 8-12 contain a combination of Jahvist and Elohist material. The end of the chapter, from v. 15 to v. 22, is Elohistic.)

Now these are the names of the sons of Israel, who came to Egypt (every man and his household came with Jacob of

ben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin, Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. And all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls: and Joseph was in Egypt already. And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation. And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them.

Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they also join themselves unto our enemies, and fight against us, and get them up out of the land. Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh store-cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel. And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour: and they made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field, all their service, wherein they made them serve with rigour. . . . And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river and every daughter ye shall save alive.

QUESTIONS. — *What happened to the Israelites in Egypt? — Why were they persecuted? — How did the Pharaoh order that the people be destroyed?*

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LESSON VII

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH OF MOSES (Fourteenth century B.C.)

Jehovah . . . made known his ways unto Moses.
(Psalm 103, 7.)

1. Moses was a beautiful child; his mother could not bear the fear of his being put to death.

2. So she left him in an ark of bulrushes, among the reeds on the brink of the Nile, and he was found and brought up by Pharaoh's daughter.

3. At the Court of the king, Moses was taught all the arts and sciences of the Egyptians, who had then advanced wonderfully in the knowledge of the mysteries of the universe.

4. Yet he was not ignorant of his birth, and the sufferings of his people moved him greatly. God was to use Moses for awakening His people, and leading them out of bondage.

NOTES

1. The discoveries of the archæologists leave little to be learned about the attainments of the Egyptians of this epoch. Toward the beginning of the fourteenth century, B.C., they were undoubtedly the most learned people of the world. Astronomy, mathematics, sculpture, and architecture, had revealed to them all their secrets. The reign of Ramses II (the Sesostris of the Greeks) is one of the most brilliant of the whole period. It is very natural to suppose that Moses, educated like a prince of

the royal house, was initiated into all the secrets and all the learning of the Egyptians. God makes use of any good means to save humanity.

2. We do not know how Moses learned about the miseries of his brothers, the Israelites. Did his parents who probably had not lost sight of him, make known to him the sad situation of the unfortunate Israelitish slaves? might we not also suppose that certain noble-hearted and generous-minded Egyptians were touched by their condition? At all events — any hypothesis is permissible — Moses learned that the men of his race were suffering under a hard bondage, and he was troubled by it to the depths of his soul.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Moses Saved from the Waters. (This story — Exodus 2, 1-10 — is from the Elohist writer.)

And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi. And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months. And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch; and she put the child therein, and laid it in the flags by the river's brink. And his sister stood afar off, to know what would be done to him. And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river-side; and she saw the ark among the flags, and sent her handmaid to fetch it. And she opened it, and saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children. Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maiden went and

called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it. And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses,* and said, Because I drew him out of the water.

QUESTIONS. — *How did the mother of Moses try to save her child? — Who found him? — What did Pharaoh's daughter do?*

LESSON VIII

MOSES IN EXILE

And God said, Certainly I will be with thee. (Exodus 3, 12.)

1. Moses goes among his brethren; but in attempting to defend one of them, he commits a murder, and he flees from the court of Pharaoh.

2. He takes refuge in the land of Midian, in the peninsula of Sinai, with Jethro, a priest of God, who gives him his daughter Zipporah in marriage. According to the old tradition, Jethro was a worshipper of Yahweh, the one true God, who was soon to reveal Himself to Israel.

3. Under the influence of Jethro, Moses comes to know the God who shall save his people. He has a

* MOSES; in Hebrew, MOSHEH; in Greek, MOUSES. It is very difficult to decide the meaning of this proper name from its etymology. The Hebrew writer does not seem to be altogether clear on the point. The word MOSHEH cannot be of Israelitic origin; perhaps it comes from the Egyptian MES or MESU, meaning CHILD; MOSES, "CHILD OF THE WATERS."

strange vision in the desert. He sees a burning bush, and out of the midst of it he hears a voice. It is Yahweh speaking to the conscience of Moses.

NOTES

1. It is impossible to determine what the faith of Abraham had become among his descendants. In the midst of a race of idolators, the superstitions of these people would naturally take firmer and firmer hold, and it is very probable that nothing less than a veritable revolution was needed to recall the Israelites to their destiny. Moses, a man of genius, the leader and real founder of the Israelitish nation, was to give to his people an ineradicable stamp, and his name was to become so great and his influence so preponderant, that the Israelites would ascribe to him all the laws enacted for centuries after. It may well be said that the spirit of Moses inspired his people; prophets and priests looked upon themselves as his successors.

2. The priest of Midian, Jethro — (so called in the passages of Elohist origin; a Jahvistic text, Exodus 2, 18, gives as the father-in-law of Moses, the priest Reguel. Is this not perhaps an error, Jethro being the son of Reguel — Jethro ben-Reguel?) — Jethro seems to have preserved the worship of the one God. What leads us to suppose that he was a worshipper of Yahweh is, that on the occasion of his visit to Moses in the desert (Exodus 18, 10-12) he recognizes Yahweh as "greater than all gods," and offers Him a sacrifice. We certainly know it was in the land of Midian that Moses came into relation with Yahweh, and that from there he went forth to reform and save his people.

BIBLE PASSAGES

1. *Moses with the priest of Midian.* (Exodus 2, 11-15; Elohist fragment.)

And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown up, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens; and he saw an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he smote the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand. And he went out the second day, and, behold, two men of the Hebrews were striving together: and he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? thinkest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, Surely the thing is known. Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian.

2. *The Burning Bush.* (Exodus 3, 1-2; combined Jahvist and Elohist passages.)

Now Moses was keeping the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the back of the wilderness, and came to the mountain of God, unto Horeb. And the angel of Jehovah appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

3. (Exodus 3, 7-13. Same origin.)

And Jehovah said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people that are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Amorite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite. And now, behold, the cry of

the children of Israel is come unto me: moreover I have seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt. And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be the token unto thee, that I have sent thee: when thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.

(Exodus 3, 13-14; Elohist.)

And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

And the sacred writer adds, to emphasize the fact that this revelation was to be the beginning of new things (Exodus 3, 15):

And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.

QUESTIONS. — *What caused Moses to flee from the court of Pharaoh? — Where did he take refuge? — What was the name of the priest of Midian? — What did Moses see in the desert?*

LESSON IX

THE EXODUS

(About 1300 B.C.)

The Egyptians shall know that I am Jehovah, when I bring out the children of Israel from among them.
(Exodus 7, 5.)

1. When Moses comes to know the high mission that God has confided to him, and has been transformed by the revelation of the power of the God of Israel, who is henceforth to be called Yahweh, I AM THAT I AM, he responds to the appeal of his God, and goes back among his people.

2. Accompanied by his brother Aaron, who is to be his spokesman, he goes before Pharaoh, and makes known to him the will of Yahweh.

3. Pharaoh is not willing to lose such a multitude of slaves. He refuses. But such calamities come to bring terror to the Egyptians (the plagues of Egypt), that at last he gives way to the prayers of his own people, and promises Moses to free his race.

4. Under the leadership of Moses, the Israelites set out for the desert, cross an arm of the Red Sea, from which the waters have withdrawn, and, safe from the Egyptian army (for it has pursued them, because Pharaoh repented of having let them go) they make their way into the peninsula of Sinai, where they are to wander forty years before being able to enter the promised land.

NOTES

1. It is very important to notice that from the Exodus, the going forth out of Egypt, the real history of the people of God dates. Up to that time, the old tribe of Abraham, hard pressed by circumstances, had wandered from Mesopotamia into Egypt; it seems to have been necessary for the people to experience all sorts of vicissitudes before they could find any repose. And what repose, when it was found! For the moment, oppressed Israel would be delivered by the powerful hand of God, with Moses as God's instrument for the deliverance. Let it not be forgotten that all the traditions relating to the Exodus — the improbable one recounted by the historian Josephus, according to Manetho, and that of the old documents, which we find again in the book of Exodus — give Moses a commanding place because of his knowledge and general culture. Josephus affirms that the deliverer of "the lepers" was a very learned priest, and the book of Exodus — (this point is important) — declares that Moses, saved by Pharaoh's daughter, was brought up at the Court, and in consequence was instructed in all the learning of the Egyptians.

2. Is it known which is the Pharaoh of the Exodus? Egyptologists are very nearly of accord upon the matter. The indications seem to point more and more clearly to Menephtah, of the nineteenth dynasty. The death of his first-born son, who shared his throne, is related on the monuments; and we know that the Egyptian king decided to let the Israelites go, only when, he like all his people, was smitten in what he held most dear.

BIBLE PASSAGES

1. *Moses before Pharaoh.* (Exodus 7, 1-13; from the Priests' Code.)

And Jehovah said unto Moses, See, I have made thee as God to Pharaoh; and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet. Thou shalt speak all that I command thee; and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land. And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh will not hearken unto you, and I will lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth my hosts, my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. And the Egyptians shall know that I am Jehovah, when I stretch forth my hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them. And Moses and Aaron did so; as Jehovah commanded them, so did they. And Moses was fourscore years old, and Aaron fourscore and three years old, when they spake unto Pharaoh.

And Jehovah spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Show a wonder for you; then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast it down before Pharaoh, that it become a serpent. And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so, as Jehovah had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh also called for the wise men and the sorcerers: and they also, the magicians of Egypt, did in like manner with their enchantments. For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. And Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as Jehovah had spoken.

2. *Passage of the Red Sea by the Israelites.* (Exodus 14, 5-8, 15-19, 21, 29; the Priests' Code.)

And it was told the king of Egypt that the people were fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was changed to-

wards the people, and they said, What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us? And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him: and he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over all of them. And Jehovah hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: for the children of Israel went out with a high hand. And the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses *and* chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, before Baal-zephon.

And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians were marching after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto Jehovah.

And Jehovah said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward. And lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thy hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go into the midst of the sea on dry ground. And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall go in after them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am Jehovah, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud removed from before them, and stood behind them. And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and Jehovah caused the sea to go *back* by a strong east wind all the night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. And it came to pass in the morning watch, that Jehovah looked forth

upon the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of cloud, and discomfited the host of the Egyptians. And he took off their chariot wheels, and they drove them heavily; so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for Jehovah fighteth for them against the Egyptians.

And Jehovah said unto Moses, Stretch out thy hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen. And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and Jehovah overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, even all the host of Pharaoh that went in after them into the sea; there remained not so much as one of them. But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.

Fragment of a song attributed to Moses, probably placed here by the editor of Exodus. (Exodus 15, 9-17.)

The enemy said,
I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil;
My desire shall be satisfied upon them;
I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.
Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them:
They sank as lead in the mighty waters.
Who is like unto thee, O Jehovah, among the gods?
Who is like thee, glorious in holiness,
Fearful in praises, doing wonders?
Thou stretchedst out thy right hand,
The earth swallowed them.
Thou in thy lovingkindness hast led the people that thou
hast redeemed:
Thou hast guided them in thy strength to thy holy habitation.
The peoples have heard, they tremble;

Pangs have taken hold on the inhabitants of Philistia.
Then were the chiefs of Edom dismayed;
The mighty men of Moab, trembling taketh hold upon them:
All the inhabitants of Canaan are melted away.
Terror and dread falleth upon them;
By the greatness of thine arm they are as still as a stone;
Till thy people pass over, O Jehovah,
Till the people pass over that thou hast purchased.
Thou wilt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain
of thine inheritance,
The place, O Jehovah, which thou hast made for thee to
dwell in.

QUESTIONS. — *What decided Moses that he was to become the deliverer of his people? — What name did God give Himself? — What does it signify? — Who was to be the spokesman for Moses? — What was the name of the Pharaoh who let the People of Israel go?*

LESSON X

ISRAEL AT MOUNT SINAI: THE COVENANT WITH YAHWEH
(The first reformation)

I am Jehovah thy God. (Exodus 20, 2.)

1. After many trials, the Israelites, under the guidance of Moses, arrive at Mount Sinai. It was there that God had previously revealed himself to Moses in the desert.
2. It is there that Moses is to accomplish a veritable reformation, the first reformation in Israel. He is to unite the whole people, make Yahweh known to them, and give them their first laws.
3. This first encounter of the people of Israel with the

living God, is a solemn thing; and on that day, in spite of their faults, their backslidings, the numerous returns they were to make to idolatry, and their indifference, the children of Israel received the stamp of a chosen people.

4. Up to this time, the nation had not been conscious of what God had done for it, and what He required in return. On the day of the assembly in the desert of Sinai, a veritable covenant was established by Moses, the ambassador of God, between Yahweh, the eternal and living God, and the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

NOTES

1. We cannot insist too much upon this reformation in Israel. Hitherto the religion of the Israelites had been, in principle, very superior to the religions of the surrounding peoples, and the tradition relating to Abraham, the missionary of the living God, seems to show plainly that at a very early epoch, the idea of a moral God had imposed itself upon the consciousness of the Israelites. But this God, though to them the one God, tolerated the existence of other gods beside himself. The covenant established by Moses between Yahweh and the people, set forth as its basis, that there is no other God but Yahweh; and so the people of Israel become the bearers of a revelation unique in the world. They are to be truly the witnesses of the Eternal God, the Creator of the moral life, the source of justice and holiness. This covenant, that marks the most memorable date in the history of Israel, is the explanation of all the teachings of the prophets, which we encounter later on. Without the reformatory and creative work of Moses, there would be no reason for the prophets at all.

2. Moses was the law-giver of his people, but let us not permit this statement to create a confusion in our minds. Moses is not directly the author of *all* the laws in the Pentateuch. This collection of laws, made up from different documents based on old traditions, but edited at various dates, is not the work of Moses. But though Moses did not write it, he inspired it; we find the stamp of his moral greatness over it all. The Jahvistic and Elohist documents, edited in the ninth century B.C.; the foundation of Deuteronomy, which was not discovered till the seventh century (621 B.C.); the Priests' Code, written in the sixth century, probably about 500 B.C., in Babylonia, give us, each for its own period, the laws which the moral, religious and political development of Israel made necessary and possible at that time; and though, after the exile, a single editor merged into one group all these old traditions and these various codes of moral and ritual law, it is still easy to separate the different literary strata in the written traditions of the people of Israel. The Decalogue in its primitive form has not come down to us. We give below the Elohist version, adapted to a social situation very different from that of the Israelites in the desert.

BIBLE PASSAGE

The Ten Commandments or the Decalogue. (This passage is from the Elohist portion of Exodus, Chap. 20, 1-18. Deuteronomy repeats the Commandments, with variations. Deut. 5, 6-21.)

And God spake all these words, saying,

I am Jehovah thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image nor any likeness of *any thing* that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them; for I Jehovah thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing lovingkindness unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain; for Jehovah will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is a sabbath unto Jehovah thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore Jehovah blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee.

Thou shalt not kill.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour's.

QUESTIONS. — *Where did Moses first lead the Israelites? — What happened in the desert of Sinai? — What is the chief importance of the covenant made there between Yahweh and the people of Israel?*

LESSON XI

JOSHUA

Only Jehovah thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses. (Joshua 1, 17.)

1. Moses did not enter the promised land. It was his successor, Joshua, who began the conquest of Canaan. The Canaanites, though already stripped of their ancient splendour, did not permit themselves to be deprived of their land without resistance. It took several centuries for the Israelites to become masters of the whole country.

2. Tradition attributes to Joshua brilliant victories over the Canaanites. He besieges Jericho, and its walls fall before him.

3. It is recounted that in a famous battle against the Amorites, the day did not pass until all the enemy had been either put to rout or massacred. It is the remembrance of this victory, sung by the poets, from whom a few lines have been preserved, that has given rise to the fabulous and much misunderstood story of *Joshua's causing the sun to stand still*.

NOTES

1. To be the successor of Moses was not an easy thing. During their long sojourn in the desert, the People of Israel had often shown themselves rebellious, and in spite of his great ascendancy over them, and his wonderful knowledge of men, Moses more than once en-

countered the ingratitude and the obstinate stupidity and blindness of the crowd. His successor, Joshua, invested with authority by Moses himself, if we accept the tradition, had the still hard task of bringing the people, though now more disciplined, into possession of the land destined for the Jews from Abram's time. We are here at the very heart of an epical tradition, and the most marvellous adventures are recounted of this march on to victory. The reality, alas! was not altogether in conformity with the poetry, and the traditions of the time just before David, show us how very difficult it was for the Israelites, under Joshua and his successors, the Judges, to establish their authority in the country occupied by the Canaanites.

2. *Joshua causes the sun to stand still.* Men of a certain critical turn, never cease to tell us how greatly they are shocked by this statement. The truth is, that only what moves can be made to stand still; and modern theories affirm, with proofs to support them, that the sun is fixed, with reference to the earth, and that it is the earth which revolves majestically about the luminous centre of our physical life.

To those who read attentively this portion of the book of Joshua, abundant evidence will present itself that we have here a quotation from an old heroic poem, unfortunately lost, entitled *the book of Jashar (the Just)*; to superficial criticism, it suffices to suggest that it is always hazardous to treat poetry as history.

BIBLE PASSAGES

1. *The death of Moses: Joshua his successor.* (Deuteronomy 34, 1-12, a rather recent fragment, made

up from old Jahvistic traditions, the Priests' Code, and additions by the editor of the book of Deuteronomy.)

And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And Jehovah showed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan, and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the hinder sea, and the South, and the Plain of the valley of Jericho the city of palm-trees, unto Zoar. And Jehovah said unto him, This is the land which I swore unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither. So Moses the servant of Jehovah died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of Jehovah. And he buried him in the valley in the land of Moab over against Bethpeor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. And Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of weeping in the mourning for Moses were ended.

And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as Jehovah commanded Moses. And there hath not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom Jehovah knew face to face, in all the signs and the wonders, which Jehovah sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, and in all the mighty hand, and in all the great terror, which Moses wrought in the sight of all Israel.

2. *The Battle of Gibeon.* (Joshua 10, 6-15, a combination from Elohist and Jahvistic sources, with the insertion of a bit of old poetry, an extract from *the book of Jashar*; very ancient.)

And the men of Gibeon sent unto Joshua to the camp to Gilgal, saying, Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come up to

us quickly, and save us, and help us: for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the hill-country are gathered together against us. So Joshua went up from Gilgal, he, and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valour. And Jehovah said unto Joshua. Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thy hands; there shall not a man of them stand before thee. Joshua therefore came upon them suddenly; *for* he went up from Gilgal all the night. And Jehovah discomfited them before Israel, and he slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and chased them by the way of the ascent of Beth-horon, and smote them to Azekah, and unto Makkedah. And it came to pass, as they fled from before Israel, while they were at the descent of Beth-horon, that Jehovah cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died: they were more who died with the hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword.

Then spake Joshua to Jehovah in the day when Jehovah delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel; and he said in the sight of Israel,

Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon;

And thou, Moon, in the valley of Aijalon.

And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed,

Until the nation had avenged themselves of their enemies.

Is not this written in the book of Jashar? And the sun stayed in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day. And there was no day like that before it or after it, that Jehovah hearkened unto the voice of a man: for Jehovah fought for Israel.

And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp to Gilgal.

QUESTIONS. — *Who was the successor of Moses? — Was Joshua able to conquer the whole land of Canaan? — What happened at the battle of Gibeon? — What is recounted of this battle, in an old poem most of which has been lost?*

LESSON XII

THE JUDGES

And Jehovah raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those that despoiled them. (Judges 2, 16.)

1. The people of Israel, in invading the land of Canaan — a land that had been civilized for centuries — did not at first confine themselves to fixed dwelling-places. The necessity of pasturing their numerous flocks and herds, as well as the ancient tradition of their nation, made them a nomadic people, the tribes necessarily living apart from one another.

2. The one bond that united them, was religion, the worship of Yahweh, instituted by Moses.

3. But often, when attacked by their neighbours, the tribes united, and elected a chief for the occasion, a shofet, who disciplined them for the time, and led them against their enemies. These chiefs (*shofetim* or judges) were veritable dictators; they prepared the way for a union of the people.

4. Among the most celebrated of the judges we find the prophetess *Deborah*, who, in the name of Yahweh united the tribes, and waged war victoriously against Sisera and the Canaanites; *Gideon*, who in the name of Yahweh repulsed the attack of the Midianites, and delivered Israel; *Jephthah*, who in the name of Yahweh defeated the Amorites, and sacrificed his daughter in the fulfil-

ment of his rash vow. Thus the glorious days were preparing, when the tribes of Israel should be one people.

NOTE

The Judges (Hebrew *sophet*, plural *sophetim*) are valiant leaders, who rise in Israel to defend the rights of the people. One of them is a woman, Deborah, who has left us, in her song of victory, one of the jewels of ancient Hebrew poetry. To get a more exact understanding of the Hebrew word which we translate rather inexactly by *judge*, let us recall the fact that the generals of the Carthaginians — a people very probably of Semitic origin, and speaking a language closely akin to the Hebrew — bore the name of *suffete*, precisely the same word as *sophet*. The *sophetim*, then, were occasional leaders, invested with temporary power, raised up that justice might be had for the oppressed tribes. The *sophetim* led the way to the unification of the tribes of Israel. Yet we must not forget the final remark of the editor of the book of Judges:— *In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.*

BIBLE PASSAGES

1. *The Song of Deborah.* (Fragments. Book of Judges 5, 12-18, 28-30.)

Awake, awake, Deborah;

Awake, awake, utter a song:

Arise, Barak, and lead away thy captives, thou son of Abinoam.

Then came down a remnant of the nobles *and* the people;
Jehovah came down for me against the mighty.

Out of Ephraim *came down* they whose root is in Amalek;
After thee, Benjamin, among thy peoples;

Out of Machir came down governors,
And out of Zebulun they that handle the marshal's staff.
And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah;
As was Issachar, so was Barak;
Into the valley they rushed forth at his feet.
By the watercourses of Reuben
There were great resolves of heart.
Why satest thou among the sheepfolds,
To hear the pipings for the flocks?
At the watercourses of Reuben
There were great searchings of heart.
Gilead abode beyond the Jordan:
And Dan, why did he remain in ships?
Asher sat still at the haven of the sea,
And abode by his creeks.
Zebulun was a people that jeopard'd their lives unto the
death,
And Naphtali, upon the high places of the field.

2. *Jotham's Fable.* (Judges 9, 8-16, 19b-20. Very ancient.)

The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive-tree, Reign thou over us. But the olive-tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, where-with by me they honour God and man, and go to wave to and fro over the trees? And the trees said to the fig-tree, Come thou, and reign over us. But the fig-tree said unto them, Should I leave my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to wave to and fro over the trees? And the trees said unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us. And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my new wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to wave to and fro over the trees? Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us. And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and take refuge in my shade; and if not, let fire come out of the

bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon. Now therefore, if ye have dealt truly and uprightly, in that ye have made Abimelech king, and if ye have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done unto him according to the deserving of his hands, then rejoice ye in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you: but if not, let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo.

QUESTIONS. — *Who were the Judges? — What does their name signify? — How did they arise? — Name the most celebrated among them.*

LESSON XIII

SAMUEL AND SAUL

And now, behold, the king walketh before me. (1 Samuel 12, 2.)

1. Samuel was the last of the judges.
2. Alarmed by the growing power of the Philistines and other neighbouring peoples who have kings, the Israelites demand of the old judge that he appoint them a king.
3. Samuel reminds the people that their sole king is Yahweh, and does not hide the fact from them that they will repent if they give up their liberty. But the people will not listen to the reasonings of Samuel, and Saul, son of Kish, a young man, handsomer than any other among the children of Israel, and taller from the shoulders upward, is anointed king by Samuel.

4. This first attempt at a monarchy was not a happy one. Saul did not walk in the ways of Yahweh. He thought he could free himself from spiritual authority; he was intoxicated by his power, and he committed fault after fault. Success deserted him, and in the battle of Gilboa he perished with his three sons.

NOTES

1. Among the sons of Saul, the sympathetic figure of Jonathan, the faithful friend, stands forth in luminous outlines. When the king his father, maddened by jealousy and illness, would have put his servant, David, to death, Jonathan interposed; and we find him always faithful to his friendship. Even when David had been forced to leave the king's court, Jonathan remembered his oath. When Jonathan is killed, at his father's side, David weeps over his friend, and composes a lament on his death. The friendship of Jonathan and David, in an epoch still barbarous and full of wars and revolutions, is a beautiful thing to contemplate.

2. When Saul felt that every one had deserted him, and he had lost all confidence in the God of his fathers he set out to find a magician to reveal to him the future. Nothing could be sadder than the end of Saul. Young and handsome and full of hope, he had brought glory to Israel so long as he walked in God's ways; but ambition, impatience of restraint, and confidence in his own powers, had led him astray; and in wretchedness and despair, on the eve of the battle that was to bring his death, he stooped so low as to enter the dwelling of a witch! — So true is it that those who think they can free

themselves from responsibility to God, are forced to return to Him by some crooked path; and often it is too late; religion has become superstition.

BIBLE PASSAGES

1. *The Israelites demand a king.* (Fragment of an old Ephraïtic chronicle, probably edited at the beginning of the eighth century before Christ. 1 Samuel 8, 10-22.)

And Samuel told all the words of Jehovah unto the people that asked of him a king. And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: he will take your sons, and appoint them unto him, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and they shall run before his chariots; and he will appoint them unto him for captains of thousands, and captains of fifties; and *he will set some* to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and the instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be perfumers, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your men-servants and your maid-servants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your flocks: and ye shall be his servants. And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king whom ye shall have chosen you; and Jehovah will not answer you in that day.

But the people refused to hearken unto the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles. And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of Jehovah. And Jehovah said to Samuel, Harken unto their

voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city.

2. *Saul Made King.* (1 Samuel 11, 11-12, 4; from an ancient source, different to the one from which the preceding fragment was taken.)

And it was so on the morrow, that Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the camp in the morning watch, and smote the Ammonites until the heat of the day: and it came to pass that they that remained were scattered, so that not two of them were left together.

And the people said unto Samuel, Who is he that said, Shall Saul reign over us? bring the men, that we may put them to death. And Saul said, There shall not a man be put to death this day; for to-day Jehovah hath wrought deliverance in Israel.

Then said Samuel to the people, Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and renew the kingdom there. And all the people went to Gilgal; and there they made Saul king before Jehovah in Gilgal; and there they offered sacrifices of peace-offerings before Jehovah; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

And Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you. And now, behold, the king walketh before you; and I am old and grayheaded; and, behold, my sons are with you: and I have walked before you from my youth unto this day. Here I am: witness against me before Jehovah, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I taken a ransom to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you. And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand.

3. *Saul with the witch of En-dor.* (1 Samuel 28,

3-20; an ancient story, probably coming out of Judah, about the tenth century B.C.)

Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city. And Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land. And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and encamped in Shunem; and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they encamped in Gilboa. And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly. And when Saul inquired of Jehovah, Jehovah answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim *, nor by prophets. Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her and inquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at En-dor.

And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and went, he and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, Divine unto me, I pray thee, by the familiar spirit and bring me up whomsoever I shall name unto thee. And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die? And Saul sware to her by Jehovah, saying, As Jehovah liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing. Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel. And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice; and the woman spake to Saul saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul. And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what seest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I see a god coming up out of the earth. And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An

* URIM and THUMMIM (lights and perfections), objects placed on the breast of the priest, for the purpose of reading the future; very probably of Egyptian origin.

old man cometh up; and he is covered with a robe. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground, and did obeisance.

And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do. And Samuel said, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing Jehovah is departed from thee, and is become thine adversary? And Jehovah hath done unto thee, as he spake by me: and Jehovah hath rent the kingdom out of thy hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David. Because thou obeyedst not the voice of Jehovah, and didst not execute his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath Jehovah done this thing unto thee this day. Moreover Jehovah will deliver Israel also with thee into the hand of the Philistines; and to-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: Jehovah will deliver the host of Israel also into the hand of the Philistines.

Then Saul fell straightway his full length upon the earth, and was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel: and there was no strength in him; for he had eaten no bread all the day, nor all the night.

QUESTIONS. — *Who was the last of the judges? — What did the people demand of him? — Did Samuel grant their request without protesting? — Who was anointed King of Israel? — What was the end of Saul?*

PART TWO
HISTORY



FIRST SECTION

THE PROPHETS

LESSON XIV

DAVID THE KING — A UNITED ISRAEL

(About 1000 B.C.)

And David perceived that Jehovah had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake. (2 Samuel 5, 12.)

1. David of Bethlehem, son of Jesse, feeds his father's flocks, and while yet only a shepherd boy, does wonderful deeds. He becomes Saul's servant, and his son-in-law. But the king, jealous of his success, is angry with him, and David flees. He becomes captain of a band, uniting around him the needy and unfortunate and discontented men of Israel.

2. Having grown very powerful, at the death of Saul and Jonathan he becomes king, and by his courage and ability, succeeds in uniting all the tribes of Israel under his authority. Jerusalem, which up to that time had resisted all the assaults of the Israelites, is taken by David, and becomes the capital of united Israel.

3. Under his able and energetic government, the peo-

ple are organized, and his rule extends from Egypt to the river Euphrates.

4. A powerful leader, a valiant warrior, a statesman and judge, although he too often became an example of unfeeling and intentional cruelty, King David nevertheless remains, for those early times, the type of the ideal king, and will always remain so in the memory of the Hebrew people.

NOTE

David is truly the national hero of Israel. As a youth, he defends his flocks against lions and bears. One day, while the Philistines and the Israelites are drawn up for battle, he goes forth alone against the giant Goliath, and slays him with a stone from his sling. Later, at the time of the expeditions of Saul against the enemies of Israel, his beauty and courage draw the attention of every one to him, and the people celebrate his feats of arms with singing and dancing.

"Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands."

Throughout the history of Israel we meet with the name of David. When the people, oppressed and overwhelmed by disaster, look upward again, it is to evoke the figure of David, the King. David grew in the popular imagination, until he became the liberator, the one who should vanquish the enemies of his people, the messenger of God, the restorer of the splendours of Israel. The House of David, the well beloved of his people, should give birth to the Lord's Anointed, who should extend the kingdom of God over all the earth, when

peace, justice, and love should reign. What a splendid destiny! And justified, for the greater part, by the courage and real piety of David.

BIBLE PASSAGE

David's Lament over Saul and Jonathan. (2 Samuel 1, 17-27.)

And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son (and he bade them teach the children of Judah *the song* of the bow: behold, it is written in the book of Jashar):

Thy glory, O Israel, is slain upon thy high places!

How are the mighty fallen!

Tell it not in Gath,

Publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon;

Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,

Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.

Ye mountains of Gilboa,

Let there be no dew nor rain upon you, neither fields of offerings:

For there the shield of the mighty was vilely cast away,

The shield of Saul, not anointed with oil.

From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty;

The bow of Jonathan turned not back,

And the sword of Saul returned not empty.

Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives,

And in their death they were not divided:

They were swifter than eagles,

They were stronger than lions.

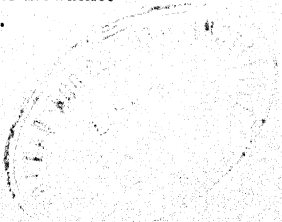
Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,

Who clothed you in scarlet delicately,

Who put ornaments of gold upon your apparel.

How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!

Jonathan is slain upon thy high places.



I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan:
Very pleasant hast thou been unto me:
Thy love to me was wonderful,
Passing the love of women.
How are the mighty fallen,
And the weapons of war perished!

QUESTIONS. — *How did David become King? — Was he a powerful king? — What was he destined to become in the history of his people?*

LESSON XV

DAVID THE SERVANT OF YAHWEH: HIS SIN AND REPENTANCE

Thou art the man. (2 Samuel 12, 7.)

1. The tradition of Israel has made of David a MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART. The whole story of his life shows that he was a devout servant of the God of his fathers, of Yahweh, the living God.

The writers who have told his deeds and exploits, have not hidden his weakness and his crimes. They do not flatter David; but they show us that if he too often let his passions get the better of him, he was not blind to the fact, and that he repented sincerely of the evil he had done.

3. David, then, is not simply the type of the ideal king, but he is the type of *man*, man with all his passions, all his weaknesses, the victim of his appetites and

of sin; but of man who mourns over his sins and listens to the voice of his conscience.

4. David the sinful but repentant man, is not less great than David the king, the valiant warrior, and the statesman.

NOTE

When it narrates the lives of the men of God, the Bible, with wonderful sincerity, hides none of their weaknesses; but for us to see nothing but their faults, is to be unjust to the Bible. This incomparable book recounts for our guidance the numerous falls of its heroes; but at the same time it lets us see the means which God puts at the service of men to preserve them from sin or raise them up after they have fallen. For every fair-minded man, who looks upon humanity as struggling in the midst of a world of sin and disorder, the Bible is the book of books, in its sincerity and its reality. We who believe that God, our Father, watches over our lives, in order to lead us into the way of perfection, love this Bible, which points out to us these ways of God for our salvation.

David, sinner that he is, knows the will of God, yet violates the law; David humiliates himself; David bemoans his sin. It is very easy to say: "He would have done better not to sin at all." — Let him who has never sinned, cast the first stone.

BIBLE PASSAGE

David's Crime: his Repentance at the Word of Nathan the Prophet. (2 Samuel 12, 1-10; 13-15.)

King David, desiring Bath-sheba, wife of Uriah the

Hittite, to be his wife, ordered Uriah to be put in the front line of battle, so that he might be killed.

The thing that David had done displeased Yahweh.

And Jehovah sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own morsel, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him, but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As Jehovah liveth, the man that hath done this is worthy to die: and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.

And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; and I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added unto thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the word of Jehovah, to do that which is evil in his sight? thou hast smitten Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thy house, because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against Jehovah. And Nathan said unto David, Jehovah also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed

thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of Jehovah to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die. And Nathan departed unto his house.

QUESTIONS. — *What is meant by the expression: "David, a man after God's own heart?" — Did David feel remorse for his sins? — Was he a very religious man?*

LESSON XVI

AHAB AND ASSYRIA

(875 B.C.)

The Story of Creation

And Jehovah God formed man of the dust of the ground. (Genesis 2, 7.)

1. The successor of David was Solomon, whose reign was one of incomparable splendour. But through his cruelty, Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, brought about the division of the people of Israel into two distinct kingdoms. This division is spoken of as the schism and the revolt. The northern kingdom, having Samaria for its capital, was called the kingdom of Israel, and the southern kingdom, with its capital at Jerusalem, was called the kingdom of Judah.

2. Among the successors of Jeroboam, king of Israel, who were almost all cruel and irreligious kings, Ahab has left behind the worst reputation of all. He had married a foreign princess, Jezebel, a worshipper of the

Phoenician gods Baal and Astarte. Naturally the religion of the queen found followers among the people.

3. It was during the reign of Ahab that the kingdom of Israel first came into strife with the Assyrians.

4. After being long at war with the Syrians, Ahab had made an alliance with their king, Ben-hadad, to combat Shalmaneser II, King of Assyria, who had begun an expedition against the kingdom of Israel. A great battle between the allies and the Assyrian king, took place at Karkar (about 854 B.C.). Ahab and Ben-hadad were defeated, but Shalmaneser did not dare push his conquest farther.

NOTES

1. It was very probably during the reign of King Ahab — at all events, about the middle of the ninth century, B.C. — that the most ancient code of Israelitic laws, the Book of the Covenant (Exodus 20, 23 — 23, 19), was compiled; and a little later the two great documents that we find blended in the first six books of the Bible, were probably edited — the *Jahvist* and the *Elohists*, the former the more ancient of the two, and of prophetic origin (probably composed at Jerusalem); the latter, of Israelitic origin, composed about forty years later than the *Jahvist*.

It is in the *Jahvist* that we find old myths and legends which have their dim origins in the most ancient traditions of the Assyro-Babylonian religion. But if the foundation is the same, the spirit is different. When Abraham took away with him from his country these old

Semitic traditions, he bequeathed them to a people that was to transform and spiritualize them. We may follow their history, and trace the manipulations and transformations through which these ancient traditions passed, by comparing for instance, the story of creation graven on the Assyro-Babylonian tablets, with the same story as it is found in the Jahvist document (of the 9th century B.C.), and in the Priests' Code (belonging to the time of the Exile). The value of these ancient traditions — they cannot make the slightest claim of entering into competition with modern scientific knowledge — is in their affirmation of the greatness of the living God, the Creator, who gives to man his conscience — that eye of the soul — and shows him that his happiness depends upon the use he makes of his liberty.

2. Apropos of the war of Ahab with the Assyrians, it is well to notice that he is the first king of Israel whose name appears on an historic tablet. It is found in a long inscription on a monolith now in the British Museum. There Shalmaneser says: "Karkar, the royal city, have I destroyed, laid waste, burned by fire. 1200 chariots, 1200 horseman, 20,000 foot-soldiers of Dadidri, of Damas; . . . 10,000 *foot-soldiers of Ahab, of the land of Israel,*" etc., etc.

BIBLE PASSAGES

The prophetic document of the Jahvist contains: 1, the story of creation (Genesis 2, 4-24); 2, the legend of paradise and the fall (Genesis 3, 1-24); 3, the first murder — Cain and Abel; 4, an account of the deluge, combined with parts of the document known as the

Priests' Code (Genesis 6, 1-8; 7, 1-5, 7-10, 12, 17, 22 25; 8, 2, 3, 6-13); 5, the story of the tower of Babel and the confusion of tongues (Genesis 11, 2-9). As it is impossible to quote all these passages, we must content ourselves with transcribing two fragments relating, the one to the creation, and the other to the fall.

1. *The Creation*

These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that Jehovah God made earth and heaven. And no plant of the field was yet in the earth, and no herb of the field had yet sprung up; for Jehovah God had not caused it to rain upon the earth: and there was not a man to till the ground; but there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground. And Jehovah God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. And Jehovah God planted a garden eastward, in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made Jehovah God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became four heads. The name of the first is Pishon: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone. And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Cush. And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth in front of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. And Jehovah God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And Jehovah God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt

not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

And Jehovah God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him. And out of the ground Jehovah God formed every beast of the field, and every bird of the heavens; and brought them unto the man to see what he would call them: and whatsoever the man called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And the man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the heavens, and to every beast of the field; but for man there was not found a help meet for him. And Jehovah God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof: and the rib, which Jehovah God had taken from the man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And the man said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

2. *The Fall*

Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which Jehovah God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of any tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they

sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of Jehovah God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Jehovah God amongst the trees of the garden.

And Jehovah God called unto the man and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And Jehovah God said unto the woman, What is this thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. And Jehovah God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, cursed art thou above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy pain and thy conception; in pain thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. And the man called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living. And Jehovah God made for Adam and for his wife coats of skins, and clothed them.

And Jehovah God said, Behold, the man is become as one of

us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever — therefore Jehovah God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden the Cherubim, and the flame of a sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

QUESTIONS. — *Among David's successors in Israel, which one has left the most regrettable memory? — Why has Ahab such a bad reputation? — What nation first makes war upon Israel during the reign of Ahab? — What do you know of the stories of the creation and the fall? — What is their meaning?*

LESSON XVII

AHAB AND ELIJAH

I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers.
(1 Kings 21, 4.)

1. Ahab not only brought into Israel the religion and superstition of the Phœnicians — a religion and superstition that were monstrous — but having abandoned the strict moral law given to the Israelites by Moses, he became a tyrant, and did not hesitate to commit murder in order that he might get possession of the property of his subjects. This happened in the case of an upright man, named Naboth. Ahab, desiring this man's vineyard, and not being able to buy it from him, had him condemned to death, through the testimony of false witnesses, and confiscated the coveted ground.

2. Elijah the Tishbite, prophet of Yahweh, who lived in the deserts and appeared only at critical moments, presents himself before the King, who has come with his officers to take possession of the vineyard of Naboth.

3. Elijah has already fought against the degrading worship of Baal; in a famous encounter he destroyed the altar of the false gods and slew their prophets. Now he suddenly appears before Ahab, reproaches him vehemently for his abominable deed, and foretells the evils that are about to come upon him.

4. Behind the king, and filled with horror at the prophet's words, stands Jehu, son of Nimshi, who later carries out the sentence now pronounced by Elijah in the name of God. And Ahab repented of the evil he had done, he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth on his body, and fasted.

NOTES

1. The idolatry of the Israelites — the practices that they borrowed from strange religions, first from the Phœnicians, then from the Babylonians — never turned them altogether aside from their national religion. When Israel's kings set up golden calves, they meant them as symbols of Yahweh; when they built temples to Baal, it was Yahweh whose worship they wished to cultivate, in the name of a Phœnician divinity; it must not be imagined that the kings and their people had changed their religion. But just as the simple worship that was offered to Christ in the primitive church, has become

transformed into a religion rich in symbols and divine intermediaries — the saints, the Virgin, the sacraments (for popular Catholicism has very little connection with evangelical Christianity, even though it claims to worship only God) — just so in Israel did the simple and austere worship of the God of Abraham and Moses, become transformed by the addition of elements foreign to it. It was against just this that the prophets were always crying out. All their effort was confined to these three things: first, to bring back the people to the spiritual worship of Jehovah; second, to strip this worship of all superstitions borrowed from neighbouring religions; third, to announce the destruction of the people, if they would not turn again to Yahweh, and the salvation of a chosen *remnant*, who should spread over the whole earth the spiritual worship of God.

2. Since we have encountered a *prophet*, let us establish once for all what we are to understand by the word. Popularly, a prophet is simply a diviner, a man who foretells the future; but nothing could be more false than this idea. A prophet — in Hebrew *nabhi* — is certainly a *seer*, but if he sees the future, it is the present that calls it up for him. A *nabhi* is a man set apart by God, and conscious of God's will. He arises out of the midst of the people, called by God's spirit to awaken men's consciences, denounce injustice, and defend the oppressed. The mission of the prophets, whom we are about to study, was to recall to the people of Israel, the kings and the priests, the covenant made by Moses between Yahweh and His people; they are foretellers of God's anger and His mercy, and incorruptible servants of justice.

BIBLE PASSAGE

The Vineyard of Naboth: Elijah before Ahab. (1 Kings 21, 1-24; 27-29.)

And it came to pass after these things, that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house; and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it: or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money. And Naboth said to Ahab, Jehovah forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee. And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.

But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said unto him, Why is thy spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread? And he said unto her, Because I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him, Give me thy vineyard for money; or else, if it please thee, I will give thee *another* vineyard for it; and he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard. And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? arise, and eat bread, and let thy heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite. So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that were in his city, *and* that dwelt with Naboth. And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people: and set two men, base fellows, before him, and let them bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst curse God and the king. And then carry him out, and stone him to death.

And the men of his city, even the elders and the nobles who dwelt in his city, did as Jezebel had sent unto them, according

as it was written in the letters which she had sent unto them. They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people. And the two men, the base fellows, came in and sat before him: and the base fellows bare witness against him, even against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth did curse God and the king. Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him to death with stones. Then they sent so Jezebel, saying, Naboth is stoned, and is dead. And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned, and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead. And it came to pass, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab arose to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.

And the word of Jehovah came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who dwelleth in Samaria: behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to take possession of it. And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine. And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee, because thou hast sold thyself to do that which is evil in the sight of Jehovah. Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will utterly sweep thee away and will cut off from Ahab every man-child, and him that is shut up and him that is left at large in Israel: and I will make thy house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked me to anger, and hast made Israel to sin. And of Jezebel also spake Jehovah, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the rampart of Jezreel. Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field shall

the birds of heaven eat. (But there was none like unto Ahab, who did sell himself to do that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all that the Amorites did, whom Jehovah cast out before the children of Israel.)

And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and wept softly. And the word of Jehovah came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days; but in his son's day will I bring the evil upon his house.

QUESTIONS. — *Was Ahab a just king? — What crime did he commit? — What did he command to be done to Naboth? — Who came to reproach him for his crime? — Who was Elijah? — What is a prophet?*

LESSON XVIII

AMOS OF TEKOA

(About 760 B.C.)

They know not to do right, saith Jehovah. (Amos 3, 10.)

1. In those days, during the reign of Jeroboam II, when Israel was more powerful than ever before except under Solomon, wealth and luxury, peace and comfort, had lulled the people into indifference and a shameful formalism. The spiritual worship of Yahweh was lost sight of under the superstitious practices borrowed from foreign religions. Golden calves were set up in the high places, and corruption spread among the people.

2. Then a prophet arose, a simple shepherd, Amos of Tekoa. He lived among his flocks, in the solitudes of the Bethlehem desert. While in meditation and prayer, he had a vision of the God of justice, whose will it was that men should live in obedience, justice and love.

3. When Amos left his desert solitude, and went down among the cities of the plain, he was filled with indignation at the luxury and wickedness he found there, and at the idolatrous worship of the official religion, and he became eloquent over the oppression and sufferings of the poor.

NOTES

1. The appearance of Amos upon the scene of the world, is an event of considerable importance. He is the first prophet whose authentic writings have come down to us. Here we have, then, at first hand, material from which to picture to ourselves the work of a prophet. His language, vigorous and pure, is full of images and very forceful. Through his writings we shall look out upon some of the most moving scenes of the history of spiritual religion. We shall see a free soul, God-inspired, in conflict with official and worldly religious practices — the prophet face to face with the priest.

2. We know little about Amos. He was a shepherd, and he watched the growth of the sycamores, whose fruit was good for food. At last, on a high feast day, he appeared before the priest Amaziah, and was driven out by him. But if we know little about the life of Amos, we have the substance of his message.

3. Tekoa is a city of Judea, an hour and a half south of Bethlehem.

BIBLE PASSAGES

1. *Jeroboam II, King of Israel* (783-743 B.C.)
(2 Kings 14, 23-29).

In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah, Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel began to reign in Samaria, and reigned forty and one years. And he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah: he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, wherewith he made Israel to sin. He restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath unto the sea of the Arabah, according to the word of Jehovah, the God of Israel, which he spake by his servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was of Gath-hepher. For Jehovah saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter; for there was none shut up nor left at large, neither was there any helper for Israel. And Jehovah said not that he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven; but he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash.

Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, and all that he did, and his might, how he warred, and how he recovered Damascus, and Hamath, which had belonged to Judah, for Israel, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? And Jeroboam slept with his fathers, even with the kings of Israel; and Zechariah his son reigned in his stead.

2. From Amos 3, 1-11.

Reproaches and Threats

Hear this word that Jehovah hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up out of the land of Egypt saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities. Shall two walk together, except they have agreed? Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? will a

young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing? Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth where no gin is *set* for him? shall a snare spring up from the ground, and have taken nothing at all? Shall the trumpet be blown in a city, and the people not be afraid? shall evil befall a city, and Jehovah hath not done it? Surely the Lord Jehovah will do nothing, except he reveal his secret unto his servants the prophets. The lion hath roared; who will not fear? The Lord Jehovah hath spoken; who can but prophesy?

Publish ye in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say, Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria, and behold what great tumults are therein, and what oppressions in the midst thereof. For they know not to do right, saith Jehovah, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces. Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: An adversary *there shall be*, even round about the land; and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be plundered.

QUESTIONS. — *In what condition was the Kingdom of Israel under Jeroboam II? — What was the state of religion? — What prophet arose? — What did he think of the society of his time?*

LESSON XIX

AMOS, PREACHER OF JUSTICE

They afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right. (Amos 5, 12.)

1. Amos stands forth as the defender of justice, which the powerful violate; he denounces the carelessness and dishonesty of judges, and assails the luxury, the selfishness and the hardheartedness of the rich.

2. He makes bold even to attack the priests, whose religion, far from being a check to evil passions, is only a veil for hypocrisy.

3. He demands justice for all, but especially for the meek, the humble, and the oppressed. God has not delivered his people out of the bondage of Egypt, in order that, in their turn, the rich and powerful among them should make slaves of their poor and needy brethren.

NOTE

The characteristic note of the preaching of the prophets is JUSTICE. Every nation has had its mission. The Greeks were the great creators of Beauty and Art. The Romans, warriors and statesman, gave the world its example of organization through Law. The Israelites, through their prophets, announced to the world a God who desires Justice and Holiness; by holiness, man approaches nearer and nearer to his Creator; through justice, peace shall come among the sons of men, now separated by selfishness and ill-will.

The prophets are powerful and inspiring preachers, to whom the men of our own time might listen with as much profit as the Israelites of eight hundred years before Christ could have found in so doing; their teaching is always in season.

BIBLE PASSAGE

(Amos 5, 10-27.)

They hate him that reproveth in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly. Forasmuch therefore as ye trample upon the poor, and take exactions from him of wheat: ye

have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink the wine thereof. For I know how manifold are your transgressions, and how mighty are your sins — ye that afflict the just, that take a bribe, and that turn aside the needy in the gate *from their right*, Therefore he that is prudent shall keep silence in such a time; for it is an evil time.

Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live; and so Jehovah, the God of hosts, will be with you, as ye say. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish justice in the gate: it may be that Jehovah, the God of hosts, will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.

Therefore thus saith Jehovah, the God of hosts, the Lord: Wailing shall be in all the broad ways; and they shall say in all the streets, Alas! alas! and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful in lamentation to wailing. And in all vineyards shall be wailing; for I will pass through the midst of thee, saith Jehovah.

Woe unto you that desire the day of Jehovah! Wherefore would ye have the day of Jehovah? It is darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. Shall not the day of Jehovah be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it? I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Yea, though ye offer me your burnt-offerings and meal-offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.

Did ye bring unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? Yea, ye have borne the tabernacle of your king and the shrine of your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves. Therefore will I cause

you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith Jehovah, whose name is the God of hosts.

QUESTIONS. — *What is the substance of the teaching of Amos? — Whom does he denounce? — For whom does he demand justice?*

LESSON XX

AMOS THE PROPHET AND AMAZIAH THE PRIEST

I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore-trees. (Amos 7, 14.)

1. At Beth-el, one of the royal sanctuaries, there was a high festival; the crowd was pressing round the temple; the golden calves and sacred symbols dazzled the eyes; the songs and sacred dances were like an intoxication to the people; incense rose from the altars.

2. Into the midst of this pomp and splendour, wearing his shepherd's dress, came the dark and forbidding figure of the prophet Amos, chanting his wail of death and destruction. The sounds of the sacred instruments died away; the priestly dances halted; the singers became mute. Tumult gave place to silence, and the crowd stood listening, breathless.

3. The prophet announces that Yahweh, God of Israel, is weary of sacrifices and ceremonies; that the anger of God will break forth; that destruction is upon them, for Yahweh will have justice.

4. Amaziah, the priest of the royal sanctuary, scandalized by such boldness, drives out the prophet of God, who has come thus to cast a cloud over the people's joy.

NOTE

Beth-el ("house of God") was one of the oldest sanctuaries in the land of Israel. According to tradition, Abraham halted there and raised an altar. It was at Beth-el that Jacob had his vision of angels ascending and descending on the ladder whose top reached to heaven. Under the judges, Beth-el was the religious centre of the tribes of the north, and near it was the palm-tree under which Deborah judged Israel. From the time of the revolt, Beth-el took on a great importance; the worship of Yahweh was organized there on a grand scale, with golden calves as symbols of the divine power, and sacred pillars. At Beth-el the people assembled in crowds for the religious festivals, and to Beth-el Amos came to denounce the crimes of the false worshippers of Yahweh. When the kingdom of Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians, King Shalmaneser II laid violent hands on the sumptuous riches of the sanctuary, and took away with him the famous golden calves. Finally, Josiah destroyed what remained of the sanctuary at Beth-el, and defiled its altar.

Beth-el (now called Beitin) is a four days' journey north of Jerusalem, on the road to Nablus.

BIBLE PASSAGES

1. *The Scene at Beth-el.* (Amos 7, 10-17.)

Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-el sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of

the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land. Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thou away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there: but prophesy not again any more at Beth-el; for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a royal house.

Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore-trees: and Jehovah took me from following the flock, and Jehovah said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel. Now therefore hear thou the word of Jehovah: Thou sayest, Prophesy not against Israel, and drop not *thy word* against the house of Isaac; therefore thus saith Jehovah: Thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thou thyself shalt die in a land that is unclean, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land.

2. *Reproaches of Amos.* (Amos 8, 1-8.)

Thus the Lord Jehovah showed me: and, behold, a basket of summer fruit. And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said Jehovah unto me, The end is come upon my people Israel; I will not again pass by them any more. And the songs of the temple shall be wailings in that day, saith the Lord Jehovah: the dead bodies shall be many; in every place shall they cast them forth with silence.

Hear this, O ye that would swallow up the needy, and cause the poor of the land to fail, saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell grain? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and dealing falsely with balances of deceit; that we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes, and sell the refuse of the wheat? Jehovah hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works. Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth

therein? yea, it shall rise up wholly like the River; and it shall be troubled and sink again, like the River of Egypt.

QUESTIONS. — *What caused the conflict between the prophet and the priest? — What do you know about Beth-el? — What did Amos announce? — What did the priest do?*

LESSON XXI

THE CALL OF ISAIAH
(740-701 B.C.)

I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. (Isaiah 6, 8.)

1. In the kingdom of Judah, the prophet Isaiah, son of Amoz (who must not be confused with the prophet Amos), proclaims a like message to that which Amos was charged to proclaim in the kingdom of the north.

2. He himself tells how he was chosen by God. In the year that King Uzziah died, Isaiah had a vision. He saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, and His train filled the temple; above stood the seraphim. And the voice of the Lord charged him with a mission.

3. The moral condition of Judah was as low as that of the kingdom of Israel; injustice, haughtiness, oppression, idolatrous and merely formal worship — these were the charges against the people of Judah. Their destruction was near at hand.

4. When the evil reaches its climax, when the cup is overflowing, Judah, the prophet says, will be destroyed, like Samaria. But a *remnant* shall be left, out of which, like a vigorous shoot, shall arise the elect, the chosen people; and the kingdom of God shall come, under the government of an ideal Prince, who shall be filled with the spirit of Yahweh.

NOTE

The threats of Amos had been realized. The kingdom of Israel, undermined by luxury and anarchy, was attacked, in the first place, by the Assyrian monarch Tiglath-Pileser III, from whom the king of Israel purchased peace with a money indemnity. In the reign of Shalmeneser IV, successor of Tiglath-Pileser, Hoshea, the last king of Israel, tried to shake off the yoke of his suzerain. At this, Shalmeneser besieged Samaria, the capital of the kingdom of Israel. The siege went on for three years, then, reduced to the last extremity, the city surrendered to Sargon, the successor of Shalmeneser, who, in 722 B.C. became master of Samaria, and led all the chief men of the Israelites into captivity. In Samaria he replaced these Israelites by natives of other countries, who intermarried with the miserable remnant of Israel that was left behind. This mixed population, with a strange and incongruous worship, though nominally that of the Israelites, was to form the Samaritan nation, which even in our own time, in the vicinity of Nablus, has a small number of representatives, jealously guarding a very old scroll of the Law.

BIBLE PASSAGES

1. *The Call of Isaiah.* (Isaiah 6, 1-7.)

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim*: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King Jehovah of hosts.

Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin forgiven.

2. *Reproaches.* (Isaiah 1, 10-20.)

Hear the word of Jehovah, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. What unto me is the multitude of your sacrifices? saith Jehovah: I have had enough of the burnt-offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to trample my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; new moon † and sabbath, the calling of assemblies — I cannot away with iniquity and the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary of bearing them. And when ye spread forth your

* SERAPHIM, winged figures. Their function is purely symbolic. They are the ministers of the invisible sanctuary.

† The appearance of the new moon was celebrated by a sacrifice.

hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evils of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

Come now and let us reason together, saith Jehovah: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword; for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it.

3. *Promises.* (Isaiah 2, 2-4.)

And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many peoples shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. And he will judge between the nations, and will decide concerning many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

QUESTIONS. — *What prophet arose in the kingdom of Judah? — Tell about Isaiah's vision. — What was the moral condition of Judah? — Were the whole people to be destroyed?*

LESSON XXII

ISAIAH AND AHAZ: IMMANUEL

(About 736 B.C.)

Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be faint-hearted. (Isaiah 7, 4.)

1. In these days Ahaz, King of Judah, is troubled in heart. Rezin, King of Syria, and Pekah, son of Remaliah, King of Israel, have united to make war against him.

2. With his officers, Ahaz goes to inspect the works of Jerusalem, and at the aqueduct the prophet Isaiah, accompanied by his son, presents himself before the king, and reproaches him for his lack of confidence in Him who has always saved Israel from the hand of her oppressors.

3. He tells the king that there is nothing to fear, and as a sign of the promised deliverance, says a child shall be born, whose name shall be called Immanuel (God with us); and before this child is old enough to distinguish good from evil, the country of the king's enemies will be laid waste.

NOTES

1. Urged on by public opinion, Pekah, king of Israel, made an alliance with Rezin, of Damascus, with the purpose of forming a league against Assyria, and opposing the warlike tendencies of that all-powerful empire. The two kings thought they could force Ahaz — who

had just mounted the throne of Judah — to join the coalition. Great preparations were made to invade the kingdom of Judah, and the allied forces were under arms; hence the terror of Ahaz. In spite of the counsels of Isaiah, Ahaz called Tiglath-Pileser to his aid. The Assyrian monarch started afield, captured Gaza (734), as well as a goodly number of other cities, and imposed a heavy tribute upon Israel. At this point, Pekah was assassinated by Hoshea, son of Elah, who submitted to the Assyrians. It was during his reign (722) that Samaria was taken by the king of Assyria.

2. *Immanuel*. Wishing to give confidence to King Ahaz, Isaiah assures him of the faithfulness of Yahweh. He shows him that in the short space of time between the birth of a child and the moment when he can as yet hardly discern good from evil, the God of Israel, by his might, will bring to naught the projects of the enemies of Judah. Why call to his aid the king of Assyria, who asks nothing better than to get a foothold in Israel? *God with us* — that alliance suffices alone.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Ahaz at the Conduit. (Isaiah 7, 1-16.)

And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it. And it was told the house of David, saying Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart trembled, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the forest tremble with the wind.

Then said Jehovah unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shear-jashub * thy son, at the end of the conduit of

* SHEAR-JASHUB MEANS THE REMNANT SHALL BE CONVERTED.

the upper pool, in the highway of the fuller's field; and say unto him Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither let thy heart be faint, because of these two tails of smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria, and of the son of Remaliah. Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have purposed evil against thee, saying, Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set up a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeel; thus saith the Lord Jehovah, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken in pieces, so that it shall not be a people: and the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.

And Jehovah spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of Jehovah thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt Jehovah. And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, that ye will weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, when he knoweth to refuse the evil, and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land whose two kings thou abhorrest shall be forsaken.

QUESTIONS. — *What did Ahaz fear? — What was the object of the alliance of Pekah and Rezin? — What did Isaiah advise? — Did Ahaz listen to him? — What sign did Isaiah give Ahaz? — What was the meaning of it?*

LESSON XXIII

ISAIAH AND HEZEKIAH; THE SECOND REFORMATION
(727 B.C.)

As birds hovering, so will Jehovah of hosts protect Jerusalem; he will protect and deliver it; he will pass over and preserve it. (Isaiah 31, 5.)

1. At the death of King Ahaz, his son Hezekiah succeeded him. The young king seems to have determined to be obedient to the will of Yahweh; at all events, he gave ear to the advice of Isaiah, who had in vain tried to inspire confidence in his father.

2. Hezekiah did what was right in the eyes of Yahweh, and the chroniclers of the kings of Judah compare his fidelity to that of glorious King David, the man after God's own heart.

3. Filled with the spirit of the prophets, he undertook a radical reform of customs and worship. In their preaching, the prophets had never ceased to insist upon the vanity and the danger of worship in the high places, with their golden calves and sacred pillars. Hezekiah resolved to destroy these centres of idolatry, and have the precepts of the law of God observed.

4. But he was not to succeed in his enterprise; for, a hundred years later, another king, more energetic than he, undertakes the same reforms; and this later king, Josiah, was, for a time at least, more fortunate than the son of Ahaz.

NOTE

The Reform of Hezekiah had no permanent influence upon the people, and perhaps the too great zeal of the king was the cause of the reaction under Manasseh. Any national reform that does not come from a transformed popular conscience, cannot fail to miss its mark, never bears good fruit. Isaiah wanted something else than a change of customs and worship by legislative means; what he wanted was a change of heart, a veritable conversion. The king, full of pleasant dreams, had deceived himself with the idea that a decree could change everything, and that good laws would take the place of good intentions. But it is not good laws that make good living, but good living that gives rise to good laws.

In times of crisis, when the bold preaching of the prophets attacked religious formalism and sought to spiritualize worship, while the priests tried as strenuously to formalize and legalize it, the people, bandied back and forth for a time by the two opposing currents, in the end followed the line of least resistance, and gave heed to the priest, who reassured them, rather than to the prophet, who disturbed. And yet, as it always does, salvation depended upon those who troubled men's consciences; but the voices of these disturbers were not obeyed. Had the reform of Hezekiah been made in the spirit of profound conversion, at once individual and national, the catastrophes then threatening would not have fallen upon the exhausted and misguided nation. What a lesson!

BIBLE PASSAGE

(2 Kings 18, 1-8.)

Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah be-

gan to reign. Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah. And he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, according to all that David his father had done. He removed the high places, and brake the pillars, and cut down the Asherah; and he brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made; for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it; and he called it Nehushtan. He trusted in Jehovah, the God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor *among them* that were before him. For he clave to Jehovah; he departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which Jehovah commanded Moses. And Jehovah was with him; withersoever he went forth he prospered: and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not. He smote the Philistines unto Gaza and the borders thereof, From the tower of the watchmen to the fortified city.

QUESTIONS. — *What king came after Ahaz? — What was his attitude toward the prophet Isaiah? — How did he understand the work of reformation? — Did he succeed? — What were the causes of his failure?*

LESSON XXIV

MICAH THE MORASTHITE

Woe to them that devise iniquity. (Micah 2, 1.)

1. By the side of Isaiah, in this time of crisis, and animated by the same spirit, stands Micah the Morasthite.
2. He is as frank as Isaiah to tell the people of their sins, and like Isaiah he foretells the destruction of both Israel and Judah.

3. Around these prophets, there is a faithful little group of men who listen to their words, and wish to put them into practice.

4. They are to form that little congregation of believers, that nucleus of the pure in heart, who, hoping against hope, will pass through the hardships of the exile, and will return to Palestine, piously bearing with them the religious literature of Israel, which they are preserving for future ages.

NOTE

There was always a small minority of God-fearing men in Israel, who were faithful to the teachings of the prophets. Already Elijah the Tishbite had complained of standing alone in his revolt against the degrading Baal worship; but God speedily showed him that there were many hundreds in Israel who had not bowed the knee before that false divinity. Just so Isaiah and Micah find about them upright men to uphold them and preserve their teaching; these men are the leaven that later shall leaven all the lump; these are they who, under Josiah, will try to save Judah through reform and conversion. They will try, but alas! —

BIBLE PASSAGES

(Micah 3, 5-8.)

Thus saith Jehovah concerning the prophets that make my people to err; that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and whoso putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him: Therefore it shall be night unto you, that ye shall have no vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down upon the prophets, and the

day shall be black over them. And the seers shall be put to shame, and the diviners confounded; yea, they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer of God. But as for me, I am full of power by the Spirit of Jehovah, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.

(Micah 2, 1-6.)

Woe to them that devise iniquity and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand. And they covet fields, and seize them; and houses, and take them away: and they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage. Therefore thus saith Jehovah: Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks, neither shall ye walk haughtily; for it is an evil time. In that day shall they take up a parable against you, and lament with a doleful lamentation, and say, We are utterly ruined: he changeth the portion of my people: how doth he remove it from me! to the rebellious he divideth our fields. Therefore thou shalt have none that shall cast the line by lot in the assembly of Jehovah.

QUESTIONS. — *What prophet arises by the side of Isaiah? — What is his mission? — Do the prophets stand alone?*

LESSON XXV

ISAIAH AND THE TRUE WORSHIP OF YAHWEH

Jehovah is a God of justice: blessed are all they that wait for him. (Isaiah 30, 18.)

1. In the book of Isaiah, we find again, set forth superbly, written in strokes of flame, the same controlling ideas that moved Amos. On account of the splendour of

his style, Isaiah has been called the prince of the prophets.

2. He preaches without respite, that Yahweh requires just judgment, and he addresses himself chiefly to the higher class of his people. He shows them how to discern the signs of the times, and points out with marvelous and unerring clearness the judgment of God that will fall upon the people unless they turn from their evil ways.

3. He preaches repentance and conversion; and in spite of everything, in spite of all the checks to his enthusiasm, he believes in the future of the chosen people, in their final success. He sees a vision of David's race on the throne of glory.

4. His preaching had more effect than the attempted reforms of Hezekiah. Judah was preserved for a hundred years, and in this short space of time the teaching of the prophets made an impression that all the trials of the exile could not efface.

NOTE

The prophet's idea is the transformation of the individual for the sake of the nation. It is the nation that must be purified and washed from the sin that has defiled it. But the collectivity can never be pardoned and enter into favour with God, until each of its members individually has confessed his sin, and set out to change his ways. It is the conversion of the individual that makes possible the salvation of the race.

BIBLE PASSAGES

(Isaiah 5, 18-26.)

Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of falsehood, and sin as it were with a cart rope; that say, Let him make speed, let him hasten his work, that we may see it; and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it! Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink; that justify the wicked for a bribe, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!

Therefore as the tongue of fire devoureth the stubble, and as the dry grass sinketh down in the flame, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust; because they have rejected the law of Jehovah of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. Therefore is the anger of Jehovah kindled against his people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them; and the mountains tremble, and their dead bodies are as refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

(Isaiah 11, 1-10.)

And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah. And his delight shall be in the fear of Jehovah; and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither decide after the hearing of his ears; but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth; and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And

righteousness shall be the girdle of his waist, and faithfulness the girdle of his loins.

And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the root of Jesse, that standeth for an ensign of the peoples, unto him shall the nations seek; and his resting-place shall be glorious.

QUESTIONS. — *What is Isaiah's idea of the religion pleasing to Yahweh? — Was not his aim the salvation of the nation? — But what did he demand first? — What was Isaiah's hope?*

LESSON XXVI

ISAIAH AND SENNACHERIB

(701 B. C.)

Woe to thee that destroyest! . . . Jehovah, be gracious unto us. (Isaiah 33, 1, 2.)

1. Sargon was dead, and Sennacherib had succeeded him on the throne of Assyria. Hezekiah, in spite of the warnings of Isaiah, believed that he could shake off the yoke of that powerful empire, and he made an alliance with Egypt against Assyria.

2. Isaiah, full of confidence in Yahweh, reproaches King Hezekiah with his weakness and credulity. Of what use can the Egyptian alliance be to him? It will only bring evils and woes upon him; he should put his trust in God alone.

3. Sennacherib invades Palestine, with all his forces, and when he has taken other walled cities, he lays siege to Jerusalem. Unable to defend it, Hezekiah and his people can only tremble before the enemy's insults and threats. But Isaiah, who alone is not dismayed, reassures both the king and the people. The Assyrians, he says, shall not harm Jerusalem, for Yahweh will protect it.

4. Hezekiah at last gives heed to the prophet's words, and trusts God to deliver him. The Egyptians are overcome by the Assyrians; but lo! a pestilence smites the army of Sennacherib, and he makes a disorderly flight into his own country, where later he is assassinated.

NOTES

1. This deliverance of Jerusalem and its king, recounted as a miracle in the book of 2 Kings, and in the narrative portion of Isaiah, is attested by Herodotus's account of the annihilation of the Assyrian army at Pelusium. He says that during the night, mice gnawed away all the leather parts of their weapons, and their bowstrings, and so the Assyrians were left at the mercy of the Egyptians. Among these latter, mice are the symbol of pestilence, so if we compare the legend recounted by Herodotus with the story gathered by the

Bible writers, we can but conclude that this providential deliverance was a violent typhus, that ravaged the Assyrian camp. Here is Herodotus's account: — "The night they arrived, field-mice overran their camp, which gnawed their quivers and bows and the leather bands of their shields, so that on the morrow they found themselves without arms, and were forced to take flight, during which many fell."

2. In the Assyrian chronicles we find the following account of the assassination of Sennacherib, which is also mentioned in the Bible:

"The 20th of Tebet, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, was killed by his sons, who had revolted. Twenty-three years Sennacherib reigned in Assyria. From the 20th of Tebet to the 2d of Adar, the revolt disturbed Assyria. The 18th of Sivan, his son Esarhaddon mounted the throne of Assyria."

(Isaiah 31, 1-4.) BIBLE PASSAGES

Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, and rely on horses and trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek Jehovah! Yet he also is wise, and will bring evil, and will not call back his words, but will arise against the house of the evil-doers, and against the help of them that work iniquity. Now the Egyptians are men, and not God, and their horses flesh, and not spirit; and when Jehovah shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall stumble, and he that is helped shall fall, and they all shall be consumed together.

(Isaiah 37, 1-7.)

And it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went

into the house of Jehovah. And he sent Eliakim, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, unto Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz. And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of contumely; for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth. It may be Jehovah thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to defy the living God, and will rebuke the words which Jehovah thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left.

So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah. And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say to your master, Thus saith Jehovah, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. Behold I will put a spirit in him, and he shall hear tidings, and shall return unto his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

(Isaiah 37, 33-38.)

Therefore thus saith Jehovah concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come unto this city, nor shoot an arrow there, neither shall he come before it with shield, nor cast up a mound against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and he shall not come unto this city, saith Jehovah. For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

And the angel of Jehovah went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand; and when men arouse early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh. And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.

QUESTIONS. — *What did Hezekiah do after the death of Sargon? — What was Isaiah's advice? — Did Hezekiah follow it? — What did Isaiah think of the Egyptian alliance? — What came of it? — What happened to Sennacherib?*

LESSON XXVII

KING JOSIAH

(640-609 B.C.)

The day of Jehovah is at hand. (Zephaniah 1, 7.)

1. King Josiah was eight years old when he came to the throne of Judah. The long reign of Manasseh had left the most unhappy memories behind, and Amon, his son, who followed him, had not turned away from the wicked practices of his father.

2. Manasseh had persecuted those who wished to remain faithful to the worship of their fathers, and had shed innocent blood till the streets of Jerusalem ran with it.

3. According to the prophets Zephaniah and Jeremiah, the moral condition of the people was very low; the impiety of the kings seems to have spread to them. In the face of triumphant wrong, men began to ask each other if Yahweh were still the living God or if he had failed his people. Jerusalem, with its crimes and its pride, was ripe for chastisement.

4. What would the young king do? Would he live like

Manasseh and die like Amon, assassinated by malcontents? Grave events and rumours of war were to decide the king's course.

NOTE

No sooner had Josiah ascended the throne, than threatening rumours of war and revolution made their way even to him. The last forty years of the seventh century B.C. were full of revolts and international disturbance. The power of Assyria continued to decline. At the end of the reign of Assurbanipal, Assyria was engaged in a terrific duel with Babylonia, and Elam also was making ready to cut off in her pride that haughty destroyer of peoples, sumptuous Nineveh. But a yet more terrifying enemy was pouring down from the table-lands of the Caucasus.

Hordes of Scythians, barbarians like the Huns and Mongols, were swarming over Media, and thence invading Asia Minor. After ravaging Mesopotamia, they rushed like a wild torrent toward Palestine, pillaging the rich cities of the coast, and penetrating even to the frontier of Egypt.

2. In these hordes of barbarians, the prophets saw the scourge of God, the instruments of his wrath against the impiety of the kings and people of Judah, and through the fear aroused by the approach of these troops of savage horsemen, they found the means of awakening the popular conscience. The world of Palestine was deeply moved, so deeply that it suffices to explain the radical change we are about to witness. Add to this salutary fear and the self-scrutiny and poignant remorse it occasioned, the discovery of a sacred book containing

terrible threats against scorers of the Law and of Yahweh, and you have all the elements of the Great Reformation of King Josiah.

BIBLE PASSAGE

The Prophet Zephaniah Announces the Destruction to Come. (Zephaniah 1, 1-18.)

The word of Jehovah which came unto Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah.

I will utterly consume all things from off the face of the ground, saith Jehovah. I will consume man and beast; I will consume the birds of the heavens, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumblingblocks with the wicked; and I will cut off man from off the face of the ground, saith Jehovah, And I will stretch out my hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, and the name of the Chemarim with the priests; and them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops; and them that worship, that swear to Jehovah and swear by Malcam; and them that are turned back from following Jehovah; and those that have not sought Jehovah, nor inquired after him.

Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord Jehovah; for the day of Jehovah is at hand; for Jehovah hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath consecrated his guests. And it shall come to pass in the day of Jehovah's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's sons, and all such as are clothed with foreign apparel. And in that day I will punish all those that leap over the threshold, that fill their master's house with violence and deceit. And in that day, saith Jehovah, there shall be the noise of a cry from the fish gate, and a wailing from the second quarter, and a great crashing from the hills. Wail, ye inhabitants of Maktesh; * for all the people of Canaan are undone; all they

* MAKTESH, a word signifying MORTAR. It is thought to refer here to a particular quarter in Jerusalem or to one of its suburbs.

that were laden with silver are cut off. And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with lamps; and I will punish the men that are settled on their lees, that say in their heart, Jehovah will not do good, neither will he do evil. And their wealth shall become a spoil, and their houses a desolation: yea, they shall build houses, but shall not inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, but shall not drink the wine thereof.

The great day of Jehovah is near, it is near and hasteth greatly, *even* the voice of the day of Jehovah; the mighty man crieth there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm, against the fortified cities, and against the high battlements. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against Jehovah; and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of Jehovah's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he will make an end, yea, a terrible end, of all them that dwell in the land.

QUESTIONS. — *Whom did King Josiah succeed? — What had Manasseh and Amon done? — What was happening in the world in general? — Of what were the people in Jerusalem afraid?*

LESSON XXVIII

DISCOVERY OF THE LAW

Thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. (Deuteronomy 6, 5.)

1. In the eighteenth year of his reign, Josiah sent his scribe Shaphan to the temple, about a matter of money which had been collected for repairing it. While Shaphan was there, Hilkiah the high priest gave him a book, which had been found in the repairing of the temple.

2. This book was the nucleus of Deuteronomy as we now have it. It was a summing up, perhaps by priests, of all the teachings of the prophets, from the days of Moses even to the solemn days of crisis through which Judah was now passing. It did not confine itself to ritual laws, rules and precepts; it gave a large place to social and humanitarian laws. It announced that the religion most pleasing to Yahweh was that of humility, obedience and faithfulness; it required justice for all men.

4. The book contained terrible threats against the violators of its law. So Josiah, already troubled in mind by the events of which we have spoken, makes a resolution, before God, to reform his people and lead them back into the way of Yahweh.

NOTE

This discovery of a book of the Law, is of the greatest importance, since now for the first time in Israel, we

come upon a book set apart as the word of God. Whence did the book come? It is difficult enough to discover its origin. It could not have been written before the time of King Hezekiah, for in that event, so pious a king and his prophet Isaiah son of Amoz, could not have failed to exact the strict application of its laws. Another reason for supposing that it could not have antedated Isaiah, is that no man of God before his time had needed all the ritual instructions it contains. Moreover, one of its chief characteristics is its attempt to infuse a higher morality into religious ceremonies and practices, and to establish among men relations of justice and humanity. These are the preoccupations of prophets, and we do not fear to mistake in affirming that in some group of pious men, still under the inspiration of Moses, this book of the law had been compiled, in the hope that a day would come when the social condition of the people of Judah would admit of such a life as it enjoins. Very likely this book of the law was written under Manasseh, by disciples of the prophets, or perhaps by priests, who hoped thus to show that the word of God as announced by the prophets might be put into practice.

BIBLE PASSAGE

(2 Kings 22, 11-20.)

And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes. And the king commanded Hilkiyah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Micaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the king's servant, saying, Go ye, inquire of Jehovah for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found; for great is the wrath of Jehovah that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened

unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us.

So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asaiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the second quarter); and they communed with her. And she said unto them, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel: Tell ye the man that sent you unto me, Thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read. Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the work of their hands, therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and it shall not be quenched. But unto the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of Jehovah, thus shall ye say to him. Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel: As touching the words which thou hast heard, because thy heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before Jehovah, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith Jehovah. Therefore, behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again.

QUESTIONS. — *What caused the reforms under Josiah? What was this book that was discovered in the temple? — Where did it come from? — When was it written? — What did it contain?*

covenant before Jehovah, to walk after Jehovah, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all *his* heart, and all *his* soul, to confirm the words of this covenant that were written in this book: and all the people stood to the covenant. And all the houses also of the high places that were in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke *Jehovah* to anger, Josiah took away, and did to them according to all the acts that he had done in Beth-el. And he slew all the priests of the high places that were there, upon the altars, and burned men's bones upon them; and he returned to Jerusalem.

And the king commanded all the people, saying, Keep the passover unto Jehovah your God, as it is written in this book of the covenant. Surely there was not kept such a passover from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah; but in the eighteenth year of king Josiah was this passover kept to Jehovah in Jerusalem.

And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to Jehovah with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him.

QUESTIONS. — *What did King Josiah do after listening to the reading of the book? — What commands did he give the people? — Did the people heed his words? — How did Josiah put the teachings of the book into practice?*

LESSON XXX

JEREMIAH OF ANATHOTH

Jeremiah, what seest thou? I see a rod of an almond-tree. (Jeremiah 1, 11.)

1. And yet, this glorious Reformation did not have the results that might have been hoped for. The outward signs of the people's apostacy had indeed disappeared; but men's hearts cannot be changed, or even roused, at a king's command, however good may be his purpose, and Josiah's attempt was only a new proof of the fact.

2. The prophet Jeremiah, that man of sternness and tenderness combined, the valiant servant of Yahweh, the preacher of the religion of the heart, saw clearly that the people's enthusiasm would die out and that though the Temple had been purified, the nation's heart had not been changed.

3. The people themselves were easily satisfied; they imagined that the temple would protect them against all national disaster, and, deceived by this false belief, they continued to live in sin and to practise injustice.

4. Jeremiah, full of grief, protested against such ways. He besought the people to turn from their sins, change their lives, consider seriously the oath they had made to serve Yahweh, the living God.

NOTE

Grievous was the destiny of Jeremiah, the tenderest and most sympathetic of men, forced by God's will, as it

was revealed to his honest conscience, to be the censor of his brothers, of prophets, priests and kings! he, whose desire was for the religion of the heart, the man of prayer and meditation, to be compelled by the tragic circumstances through which his nation was passing, to throw himself into the mêlée, and to foretell the most direful misfortunes — the downfall of the nation and the loss of liberty! he, the ardent patriot, who loved passionately his country and his people, to be accused of treason and to become the most unpopular man of his time! Always at the front, never any repose, fighting to the last day, the last ditch! In the face of the blindness of kings, prophets, priests and people, he has a very distinct vision of the needs of the hour; he sees the approaching ruin; he sees the Babylonian empire growing into a tremendous power; he sees the folly of Judah's rulers, who counsel war against this giant, in alliance with treacherous Egypt. And now his prophecies begin to be realized; the hordes of Babylonia draw near, encamp about the city, raze it to the ground. The heel of Babylon is on Judah's neck, and Judah is led away captive, to rejoin those of her brothers who, a hundred years earlier, had been reduced to slavery after the overthrow of Samaria. Israel and Judah are wiped out of existence.

Left behind at Jerusalem, with the miserable remnant of his race, Jeremiah, according to the tradition, was finally carried into Egypt, after a rebellion of this remnant against their Babylonian governor, and there stoned to death by his own people.

Jeremiah was born of a priestly family, in the little

town of Anathoth, an hour's journey north of Jerusalem. It was in the thirteenth year of the reign of King Josiah that he was called of God. He was born in the reign of Manasseh, and grew up during this king's persecutions of the servants of Yahweh. It is not known what part Jeremiah took in the Reformation of Josiah, but up to the time of Josiah's death, he had been able to announce his message without arousing too much opposition. However, from the moment of Josiah's tragic disappearance from the scene of the world's affairs, Jeremiah's life was nothing but a series of self-sacrifices and tribulations. Jeremiah was one of the greatest among the servants of God, and one of the most remarkable men in the history of humanity.

BIBLE PASSAGES

1. *The call of Jeremiah.* (Jeremiah 1, 1-12.)

The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin: to whom the word of Jehovah came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.

Now the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, I have appointed thee a prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord Jehovah! behold, I know not how to speak; for I am a child. But Jehovah said unto me, Say not, I am a child; for to whomsoever I shall send thee thou shalt go, and whatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid because of them; for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith Jehovah. Then Jehovah put forth his hand, and touched my mouth; and Jehovah said

unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth: see, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.

Moreover the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond-tree.* Then said Jehovah unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I watch over my word to perform it.

2. *The Prophet's Complaints.* (Jeremiah 20, 7-11.)

O Jehovah thou hast persuaded me, and I was persuaded; thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am become a laughing-stock all the day, every one mocketh me. For as often as I speak, I cry out; I cry, Violence and destruction! because the word of Jehovah is made a reproach unto me, and a derision, all the day. And if I say, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name, then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, and I cannot *contain*. For I have heard the defaming of many, terror on every side. Denounce, and we will denounce him, *say* all my familiar friends, they that watch for my fall; peradventure he will be persuaded, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him. But Jehovah is with me as a mighty one *and a terrible*.

(Jeremiah 15, 15-18.)

O Jehovah, thou knowest; remember me and visit me, and avenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in thy long-suffering: know that for thy sake I have suffered reproach. Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy words were unto me a joy and the rejoicing of my heart: for I am called by thy name, O Jehovah, God of hosts. I sat not in the assembly of

* Symbol of vigilance and activity. In the midst of the sleep of winter, the almond-tree begins to stir with life, and bursts into bloom. The Hebrew name for the almond comes from a verbal root meaning to watch.

them that make merry, nor rejoiced; I sat alone because of thy hand; for thou hast filled me with indignation. Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? wilt thou indeed be unto me as a deceitful brook, as waters that fail?

3. *Religion of the Heart.* (Jeremiah 31, 31-34.)

Behold the days are come, saith Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith Jehovah. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith Jehovah: I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their hearts will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Jehovah: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more.

QUESTIONS. — *Did the Reformation under Josiah have the results that might have been hoped for? — Why did it not? — What prophet arose to reproach the people for their indifference? — How did the people come to look upon the Temple?*

LESSON XXXI

JEREMIAH AT THE TEMPLE GATE
(608 B.C.)

Amend your ways and your doings. (Jeremiah 7, 3.)

1. The prophecies of Jeremiah were about to be fulfilled. Josiah, led on perhaps by the false hopes of his

people, marched against Pharoah-necoh, king of Egypt, who was going up against the king of Assyria; and the Pharoah slew him at Megiddo, "when he had seen him."

2. When the people of Jerusalem saw the troops returning with the dead body of their king, they were greatly moved. They seemed to see already the squadrons of the enemy coming down upon them like a cloud of locusts. But the Temple — was it not always with them — the refuge given by Yahweh! would it not protect the city against its cruel invaders?

3. In these hours of anguish and suspense, Jerusalem did not know what to expect. It had no leader. Jehoahaz had been put in bonds by Pharoah-necoh, at Riblah, so that he might no longer rule in Jerusalem, and Eliakim, under the name of Jehoiakim, had been raised to the throne in his place. But these events happened far from Jerusalem, and in the city there was great terror.

4. The people crowded into the court of the Temple, and at Yahweh's command, Jeremiah came to the Temple gate, and in a courageous speech reminded the people that the Temple would not save them unless they turned from their evil ways.

NOTE

The Egyptian King, Necoh II, the son of Psammetichus, asked only to pass on his way, without disturbing the king of Judah. He wanted to hasten in order to get

his share of the spoils of Assyria. Josiah's inopportune interference delayed him but a few weeks. It is probable that he assassinated Josiah, and that the army of Judah fled. Neco continued his triumphal march across Syria, of which he easily made himself master. Success roused his ambition, and he advanced in hope of new conquests. While the army was besieging Nineveh, a body of troops commanded by Nebuchadnezzar met the Egyptians, and defeated them before the famous city of Carchemish. The Pharaoh fled, pursued by the Chaldean army; but Nebuchadnezzar, called back by news of his father's death, made a treaty with Neco, by which Neco renounced his rights to sovereignty over Palestine and all Syria. The king of Judah swore fidelity to the conquerors of Neco.

BIBLE PASSAGE

(Jeremiah 7, 1-11; 21-26.)

The word that came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, saying, Stand in the gate of Jehovah's house, and proclaim there his word, and say, Hear the word of Jehovah, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship Jehovah. Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah, are these. For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute justice between a man and his neighbour; if ye oppress not the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your own hurt: then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, from of old even for evermore.

Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye

steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods that ye have not known, and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered; that ye may do all these abominations? Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it, saith Jehovah.

Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel: Add your burnt-offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat ye flesh. For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices: but this thing I commanded them, saying Hearken unto my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people; and walk ye in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in *their own* counsels *and* in the stubbornness of their evil heart, and went backward and not forward. Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day, I have sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them: yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff: they did worse than their fathers.

QUESTIONS. — *What predictions did Jeremiah make? — What happened to Josiah? — Why did he go up against Necho? — How did he die? — Was Jerusalem moved by his death? — What did Jeremiah do?*

LESSON XXXII

PERSECUTION OF JEREMIAH THE PROPHET

Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake. (Matthew 5, 10.)

1. Jeremiah had not ceased to raise his voice against the Egyptian alliance. He had pointed out that the strength of Chaldea would easily get the better of the weak kingdom of Judah, which was now misled by its leaders, and no longer seeking its safety in Yahweh alone. Jerusalem would be destroyed, and Judah would be led away captive.

2. Events proved Jeremiah to be right. Under Jehoia-kim, Jerusalem came to the verge of ruin; his successor was taken captive, and King Zedekiah was unable to keep up the struggle. But upon him was to fall the punishment for the errors of his predecessors. The Chaldeans, under the leadership of Nebuchadnezzar, laid siege to Jerusalem. The drama was rolling on toward its end.

3. During a short absence of the besieging army, Jeremiah attempted to flee from Jerusalem, that he might escape from the anger of the people, who could not forgive his obstinate preaching of submission to the king of Babylon. He was stopped at the gate, and on the charge of treason, was thrown into prison.

4. The king set him at liberty, but as he continued his preaching, in spite of the opposition of the people and

their leaders, the king abandoned him to his enemies, who cast him into a pit. He was saved once more, this time by the intervention of the Ethiopian slave, Ebed-melech, who, by the king's orders, had him taken out of the miry pit into which he had been thrown.

5. At length the catastrophe was at hand. After a siege full of horrors, and a bloody battle, Jerusalem fell into the power of the Babylonians (586 B.C.). The king of Babylon put out the eyes of Zedekiah, slew his sons, and led away into captivity all the men of any importance in Jerusalem.

NOTES

1. Nothing could be more tragic than this heroic struggle of Jeremiah against a whole nation. Tradition has been unjust to this great prophet, whom she has represented as a rather feeble creature, always weeping and lamenting. On the contrary, his was a soul heroic to the point of martyrdom. Though rejected by the people, cast out by their leaders, and forsaken by the king, he did not cease to declare openly what he believed to be the truth. Though he was an ardent patriot, circumstances made him appear otherwise, and, to his misfortune, all his unhappy prophecies were fulfilled. Jerusalem came to ruin — a fact of the utmost consequence in the history of the revelations of God. Until that day, in spite of the efforts of the prophets, the God of Israel had been looked upon as a national God, who would watch over his people with a jealous care. Now Jerusalem falls; Israel loses its independence; the God of

Israel, Yahweh, becomes at the same time the God of the whole world. In God's plan, the destruction of the earthly Jerusalem is the great act which transforms the exclusive religion of the Israelites into the universal and moral religion of the one God, of God the Father, who shall reveal Himself, in all His plenitude, in the person of Jesus Christ.

2. After the defeat of Josiah, Jehoiakim submitted to Babylon; but rebelling soon afterward, he perished, and his son Jehoiachin (Coniah) could not resist Nebuchadnezzar, who took him away into Babylon, with seven thousand men, all the warriors and artisans there were left. Jehoiachin's uncle, Mattaniah, was made king in his stead, under the name of Zedekiah. In the ninth year of his reign, being assured of the aid of the king of Egypt, Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar was pitiless in his revenge. Like an eagle swooping on its prey, he encompassed Jerusalem. The siege was horrible. After the city had been invested for eighteen months, on the 9th of July, 586 B.C., a breach was made in the walls. Zedekiah and his warriors fled. They were pursued and overtaken, and carried up to the King of Babylon at Riblah. Zedekiah's sons were slain in his presence, his own eyes were put out and he was thrown into chains. He died miserably in prison. A month later, Nebuzaradan, the captain of Nebuchadnezzar's guard, arrived at Jerusalem, to execute the vengeance of the Babylonian king. The Temple, the palace and every great house of Jerusalem, he stript and burned. He razed the walls of the city, and the captain of the guard and the priests and what men of note were left,

he took to the king at Riblah, where they were put to death. None remained in Judah save the poorest of the land, who were left to be vine-dressers and husbandmen. Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, was made governor over these, but he was soon assassinated by fanatics, and a general massacre followed. The residue of the Israelites, taking with them Jeremiah, who had been spared by the king of Babylon, fled into Egypt, where they established themselves in Tahpanhes, a frontier city of the Delta. It was there, according to the tradition, that Jeremiah was stoned to death.

So the kingdom of Judah disappeared from the midst of the nations.

BIBLE PASSAGES

(Jeremiah **37**, 11-15.)

And it came to pass that, when the army of the Chaldeans was broken up from Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army, then Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin, to receive his portion there, in the midst of the people. And when he was in the gate of Benjamin, a captain of the ward was there, whose name was Irijah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah; and he laid hold on Jeremiah the prophet saying, Thou art falling away to the Chaldeans. Then said Jeremiah, It is false; I am not falling away to the Chaldeans. But he hearkened not to him; so Irijah laid hold on Jeremiah, and brought him to the princes. And the princes were wroth with Jeremiah, and smote him, and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe; for they had made that the prison.

(Jeremiah **38**, 4-13.)

Then the princes said unto the king, Let this man, we pray thee, be put to death; forasmuch as he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the

people, in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt. And Zedekiah the king said, Behold, he is in your hand; for the king is not he that can do anything against you. Then took they Jeremiah and cast him into the dungeon of Malchijah the king's son, that was in the court of the guard: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire; and Jeremiah sank in the mire.

Now when Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, a eunuch, who was in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon (the king then sitting in the gate of Benjamin), Ebed melech went forth out of the king's house, and spake to the king, saying, My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon; and he is like to die in the place where he is, because of the famine; for there is no more bread in the city. Then the king commanded Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, Take from hence thirty men with thee, and take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon before he die. So Ebed-melech took the men with him, and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took thence rags and worn-out garments, and let them down by cords into the dungeon to Jeremiah. And Ebed-melech the Ethiopian said unto Jeremiah, Put now these rags and worn-out garments under thine arm-holes under the cords. And Jeremiah did so. So they drew up Jeremiah with the cords, and took him up out of the dungeon: and Jeremiah remained in the court of the guard.

QUESTIONS. — *What attitude did Jeremiah take during the reigns of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah? — What happened to him? — Who got him, out of the pit? — What was the fate of Jerusalem?*

LESSON XXXIII

EZEKIEL

I will sanctify my great name, which hath been profaned among the nations, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the nations shall know that I am Jehovah, saith the Lord Jehovah, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. (Ezekiel 36, 23.)

1. Jerusalem had been destroyed; no one was left in the cities of Judah but the poor and the infirm; the leaders of the people, the priests and the men of war, had all been led away captive into Babylon; the exile had begun, with all its sorrows to follow.

2. Jeremiah wrote to the captives, advising them to submit themselves to the will of God. He knew that this trial would strengthen the people, and turn them again to the worship of Yahweh; having passed through the discipline of suffering and sacrifice, the purified Israel would have the vision of the universal God, and prepare the coming of His kingdom. Then justice would reign in all the earth.

3. With the captives on the banks of the river Chebar, is Ezekiel, whose mission is to comfort the people and prepare them for their great missionary future in the world.

4. In a dramatic vision, he looks out upon a great valley full of bones; death hovers over the vast place. Then the spirit of God gives life to these bones; these slain men

live again and stand upon their feet, and become a great army of the living! It is the spiritual Israel, that has shaken off the material bonds of nationality.

NOTE

(The Babylonian Captivity, 586-538 B. C.)

The exile was a period of sifting for the nation. It seems that a great majority of the captives quickly accustomed themselves to their new country; they established homes, and grew rich in the land of their exile; but a remnant of pious men looked forward patiently to the promised deliverance, that had been foretold, like their chastisement, by the prophets. Making a group around the prophet Ezekiel and some of their priests, these faithful Israelites gathered up with jealous care all their old traditions and the fragments of the preaching of the prophets. These faithful servants of God wept over Israel's sins, and kept up their courage by reading the messages of Yahweh. God's spirit was labouring with their consciences, and He was revealing Himself to them as the Father and the sovereign God, who should rule the nations. Their faith was being purified. The work accomplished in them by their meditations and by the spirit of prayer, was transforming these men, now freed from the narrow limits of their nationality; and the hope of the Deliverer who should come to save the remnant of the true friends of God, filled their hearts with enthusiasm. So were their souls being wrought upon. In exile they were beginning to comprehend the exhortations of the prophets; perhaps they would also come to understand that God had been revealing Him-

self to humanity, little by little, through Israel, stooping to the moral level of the nation, in order that he might raise it up and render it worthy of becoming one day, in Jesus Christ, the veritable ambassador of the Everlasting God, to reveal His will to all the nations of the earth.

BIBLE PASSAGES

(Ezekiel **36**, 26-32.)

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my ordinances, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. And I will save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the grain, and will multiply it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye may receive no more the reproach of famine among the nations. Then shall ye remember your evil ways, and your doings that were not good; and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.

Not for your sake do I *this*, saith the Lord Jehovah, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel.

Vision of the Dry Bones. (Ezekiel **37**, 1-14.)

The hand of Jehovah was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of Jehovah, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones. And he caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord Jehovah, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophesy over these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word

of Jehovah, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah unto these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah.

So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and, behold, an earthquake; and the bones came together, bone to its bone. And I beheld, and lo, there were sinews upon them, and flesh came up, and skin covered them above; but there was no breath in them. Then said he unto me prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.

Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off. Therefore prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, O my people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am Jehovah, when I have opened your graves, and caused you to come up out of your graves, O my people. And I will put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I will place you in your own land: and ye shall know that I, Jehovah, have spoken it and performed it, saith Jehovah.

(Psalm 137, 1-6.)

By the rivers of Babylon,
There we sat down, yea, we wept,
When we remembered Zion.
Upon the willows in the midst thereof
We hanged up our harps.
For there they that led us captive required of us songs,

And they that wasted us *required of us mirth*, saying,
Sing us one of the songs of Zion.
How shall we sing Jehovah's song
In a foreign land?
If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand forget *her skill*.
Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth,
If I remember thee not;
If I prefer not Jerusalem
Above my chief joy.

QUESTIONS. — *How long was the exile to last? — Did the exiles all think alike? — What did Jeremiah write to them? — Where was the prophet Ezekiel? — What did the pious men among the exiles expect?*

LESSON XXXIV

WHERE IS GOD'S JUSTICE? — THE POEM OF JOB

Behold, God is great, and we know him not. (Job 36, 26.)

1. However, not all the pious men among the exiles were resigned. Discussions often arose among them, and they often asked one another why good men were punished while wicked ones were spared. More than one among them shook his head as he said: "God is great, and we know Him not."

2. The book of Job, that wonderful poem, so dramatic and so pathetic, sprang from these questionings. Job was a righteous man overwhelmed by misfortunes, whose friends aggravated his suffering by declaring that he was being punished for his sins.

3. And Job protested. His conscience was clear before his God, and God could not be unjust.

4. But the voice in the storm declared that God is too great for mortals to know His ways. The Kingdom of God is the kingdom of the infinite and eternal, and many things take place there that we can neither explain nor understand. We should be ready to bow before mysteries.

NOTE

It is very difficult to determine whether the poem of Job is woven about a historic fact, or whether it is merely a religious story serving as setting for a theological discussion. In the book of the prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 14, 14-20), we find Job mentioned, which leads us to suppose that the story was known in his day. Was it an old tradition that circumstances had recalled to the memory of the Israelitish thinkers? We know nothing about it. The whole poem proclaims that its questions arise out of a time of great stress, national and individual, and it is in view of this fact that we assign its composition to this epoch.

BIBLE PASSAGES

(Job 1, 1-3, 6-12, 20-22; 2, 7-10.)

There was a man in the land of Uz,* whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and turned away from evil. And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses, and a very great household;

* THE LAND OF UZ; in the northern part of the Arabian desert.

so that this man was the greatest of all the children of the east.*

Now it came to pass on the day when the sons of God came to present themselves before Jehovah, that Satan also came among them. And Jehovah said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered Jehovah, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And Jehovah said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job? for there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God, and turneth away from evil. Then Satan answered Jehovah, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath, on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will renounce thee to thy face. And Jehovah said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thy hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of Jehovah.

Satan destroys all Job's wealth, and causes the death of all his children.

Then Job arose, and rent his robe, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped; and he said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: Jehovah gave, and Jehovah hath taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

Satan again presents himself before Jehovah, and obtains permission to harm Job bodily.

So Satan went forth from the presence of Jehovah, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.

* CHILDREN OF THE EAST; men of the Arab tribes to the east of Palestine.

And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself therewith; and he sat among the ashes. Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still hold fast thine integrity? renounce God, and die. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.

Job's Submission. (Job 40, 1-5; 42, 1-6.)

Moreover Jehovah answered Job, and said,
Shall he that cavilleth contend with the Almighty?
He that argueth with God, let him answer it.

Then Job answered Jehovah, and said,
Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer thee?
I lay my hand upon my mouth.
Once have I spoken, and I will not answer;
Yea, twice, but I will proceed no further.

Then Job answered Jehovah, and said,
I know that thou canst do all things,
And that no purpose of thine can be restrained.
Who is this that hideth counsel without knowledge?
Therefore have I uttered that which I understood not,
Things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.
Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak;
I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.
I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear;
But now mine eye seeth thee:
Wherefore I abhor *myself*,
And repent in dust and ashes.

QUESTIONS. — *Did all the pious Jews accept with resignation the cruel experiences of the exile? — What did some of them think? — What is the book of Job? — What is it meant to show?*

LESSON XXXV

THE GREAT UNKNOWN PROPHET OF THE EXILE

(Isaiah 40-66)

(About 540 B.C.)

My servant . . . will bring forth justice in truth. (Isaiah 42, 1, 3.)

1. The things that the prophets had announced, had been realized. God's people, by passing through trial, had come to understand the meaning of trial, had come to put their trust in God. Yet Israel could not attribute to her own works the deliverance that was coming; it was out of His pure goodness that the God of their fathers was about to break His people's chains.

2. Israel was once more to enter the land promised to Abraham. By her piety, her submission, her spirit of sacrifice, she would become the true servant of Yahweh, of the God who willed to save all humanity.

3. Who was to be the instrument of God in the deliverance of his people? God, who acts through man, His mouthpiece and His agent, was to make use of Cyrus, the Persian king. Cyrus would lay haughty Babylon low, and give freedom to the captives.

NOTE

The Babylonian empire, rich and powerful as it was, had been able to maintain its position only by force of arms and the astuteness of its kings. Now, its decadence was moving on swiftly. A young prince, king of Anshan, tributary to Media, had rebelled against his suzerain,

Astyages, and defeated him. It was the power of Persia beginning to loom above the horizon. The victories of the young Cyrus excited great hopes and no less great fears. Babylon was now menaced by the young warrior, and nothing is more marvellous than the rapidity of his conquests; his march is like a lightning flash; everything goes down before him. Babylon falls into his hands. Here is an extract from an inscription relating the victory of Cyrus, and attributing it to the god Marduk.

" . . . (Marduk) searched everywhere, and when he saw him he called him the just prince, and took him by the hand, for he had found favour with his heart. Cyrus, king of Anshan; he called him by his name, and designated him as ruler of the vast world . . . Marduk, the lord, the guardian of his people, saw with joy his pious works and his upright heart; he commanded him to go to his own city, the city of Babylon; and taking his place beside him, like a friend and companion, he led him along the route to Babylon. He permitted him to enter Babylon without making any attack, and he spared Babylon. Nabonidus, its king, who had neglected the city, was delivered into his hands. All the people of Babylon, of Shumer and Akkad, the nobles and the governors, prostrated themselves before Cyrus, embracing his feet; they rejoiced in his victory and showed their joy."

So by the Babylonians themselves Cyrus was regarded as an instrument of God. The prophet of the exile did not think otherwise.

BIBLE PASSAGES

(Isaiah 40, 1-5.)

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem; and cry unto her, that her warfare is

accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she hath received of Jehovah's hand double for all her sins.

The voice of one that crieth, Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of Jehovah; make level in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the uneven shall be made level, and the rough places a plain: and the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it.

(Isaiah 42, 1-13.)

Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. He will not cry, nor lift up his voice, nor cause it to be heard in the street. A bruised reed will he not break, and a dimly burning wick will he not quench: he will bring forth justice in truth. He will not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set justice in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law.

Thus saith God Jehovah, he that created the heavens, and stretched them forth; he that spread abroad the earth and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth bread unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: I, Jehovah, have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thy hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house. I am Jehovah, that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise unto graven images. Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them.

Sing unto Jehovah a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth; ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein, the isles, and the inhabitants thereof. Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up *their voice*, the villages that Kedar doth in-

habit; let the inhabitants of Sela sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. Let them give glory unto Jehovah, and declare his praise in the islands. Jehovah will go forth as a mighty man; he will stir up *his* zeal like a man of war: he will cry, yea, he will shout aloud; he will do mightily against his enemies.

The Call of Cyrus. (Isaiah 44, 24-45, 7.)

Thus saith Jehovah, thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb: I am Jehovah, that makest all things; that stretchest forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth (who is with me?); that frustrateth the signs of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish; that confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith of Jerusalem, She shall be inhabited; and of the cities of Judah, They shall be built, and I will raise up the waste places thereof; that saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers; that saith of Cyrus, *He is* my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure, even saying of Jerusalem, She shall be built; and of the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

Thus saith Jehovah to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him, and I will loose the loins of kings; to open the doors before him, and the gates shall not be shut: I will go before thee, and make the rough places smooth; I will break in pieces the doors of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron; and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that it is I, Jehovah, who call thee by thy name, even the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel my chosen, I have called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. I am Jehovah, and there is none else; beside me there is no God. I will gird thee, though thou hast not known me; that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides me: I

am Jehovah, and there is none else, I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I am Jehovah, that doeth all these things.

QUESTIONS. — *What changes came over the Israelites during the exile? — Was trial good for them? — How did God save them? — Who was the instrument of his mercy? — What do you know about Cyrus?*

SECOND SECTION

JUDAISM

LESSON XXXVI

THE RETURN FROM EXILE

(538 B. C.)

Cyrus . . . shall perform all my pleasure. (Isaiah 44, 28.)

1. King Cyrus having published throughout his kingdom an edict permitting the Israelites to return to their country and rebuild the Temple, Zerubbabel, prince of Judah, a descendant of the kings of Israel, put himself at the head of a caravan made up of forty thousand men and set out. They crossed the desert without hindrance.

2. Arrived in Palestine, the exiles at once went to work. But they were interfered with by the Samaritans, whose offers of help they had refused, and they had to discontinue what they had begun.

3. However, thanks to the energy of their leaders, to the repeated appeals of Haggai and Zechariah, and also to the friendliness of the governors sent out by the second successor of Cyrus, Darius, son of Hystaspes, the work was taken up again; the Temple was soon finished, and the old form of worship, with all its splendour, was again installed in the house of God.

4. In the sixth year of the reign of Darius (516 B.C.), the new Temple was dedicated.

NOTES

1. We may well admire the marvellous dispensations of God's mercy, in His direction of human events. At the time of the birth of Christ, the world was governed by a single powerful hand, and the people, at peace, could hear and understand the peace-bearing word of God. At the end of the sixth century B.C., when the Jews were about to re-enter their land, and to raise a new Temple to the glory of God, one king, Cyrus, who was at first but the head of a small nation, became the most powerful sovereign in the world; and being a very religious man, he wished to recognize God's benefits to him by setting free, under governors chosen by him, the divers peoples who had become submissive to his power, and restoring their traditional worship. The inscriptions represent him as building temples to the gods of the nations, for which their priests chant his praise. In this spirit, he frees the Jews, sends them back to their own country, and gives them the means to raise their Temple from its ruins.

2. The Samaritans, whom we now meet again, were, as we have already seen, a mixed people, formed by the

alliance of the poor Israelites left in Samaria after the destruction of the kingdom of Israel (722 B.C.), with the population brought in by their conquerors. They had established a worship, founded upon the old Mosaic traditions, intermingled with superstitions and idolatrous practices that the faithful Jews looked upon with horror. When these Jews returned from the Exile, the Samaritans wished to unite with them in rebuilding the Temple of Yahweh; but the exiles, whom their many vicissitudes had rendered careful in the choice of allies, repulsed them. This was the beginning of the profound hatred between the two peoples, a hatred that was far from being stamped out at the time of the coming of Christ. But Jesus, who came to bring peace, gave by word and example a rude blow to this long-standing division. We need but recall the story of His revelations to the woman of Samaria, and the parable of the Good Samaritan, to perceive clearly Jesus's ideas on the subject.

BIBLE PASSAGES

(Ezra 1, 1-4.)

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and *put it* also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath Jehovah, the God of heaven, given me; and he hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whosoever there is among you of all his people, his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of Jehovah, the God of Israel (he is God), which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever is left, in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help

him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, besides the freewill-offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.

Dedication of the Temple. (Ezra 6, 16-22.)

And the children of Israel, the priests and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy. And they offered at the dedication of this house of God a hundred bullocks, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and for a sin offering for all Israel, twelve he-goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel. And they set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God, which is at Jerusalem; as it is written in the book of Moses.

And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month. For the priests and the Levites had purified themselves together; all of them were pure: and they killed the passover for all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves. And the children of Israel that were come again out of the captivity, and all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the nations of the land, to seek Jehovah, the God of Israel, did eat, and kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for Jehovah had made them joyful, and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

QUESTIONS.—*What king set the Israelites free?—Who was their leader?—What did they do as soon as they had returned to their own country?—Who offered them aid?—How did they dedicate their Temple?*

LESSON XXXVII

THE RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS OF THE JEWS AT THE TIME OF THEIR RETURN FROM EXILE

Ye shall be holy; for I Jehovah your God am holy
(Leviticus 19, 2.)

1. During the exile, the Israelites had collected with jealous care the Psalms, the discourses of the prophets, and whatever other writings they had been able to preserve. These were a rich treasure to which they clung more tenaciously than to life itself. These works, written on rolls made of skins or on leaves of papyrus, were read by the priests to the different assemblies of the people, that came together in those houses of prayer afterward called synagogues.

2. The most extensive work compiled at this epoch is the Priests' Code, which is found principally in the book of Leviticus, a summary of laws and legal prescriptions, arising from the necessity of organizing the Jewish community. This Code, edited at the beginning of the fifth century B.C., among the disciples of Ezekiel, aims for national purity and holiness.

3. Evidently these laws and the historic introduction preceding them, rest upon an older tradition. In their pages we find a story of the creation, differing in details from the one we have already mentioned, showing how the old Babylonian myths, brought into Israel in the very far and dim past — perhaps by the hero of those

early ages, Abraham — had been purified in passing through the religious consciousness of a people chosen by God.

NOTE

(Genesis 1, 1-2, 3.)

It may be interesting to compare the old Babylonian myth with the text of the Priests' Code. We give here the fragments of the story as it is found on the old tablets of burnt brick, unearthed in the library of Assurbanipal.

When the firmament was not yet named,
And the earth beneath did not bear a name,
The deep, ancestor of them both,
Mummu-Tiamat, the mother of all,
Wrapt them round with its intermingling currents.

The gods did not yet exist,
Nothing was named, no destiny determined.
Then the Gods Lachmu and Lachamu were born.

Long ages rolled away;
The gods Anu and Ea were born.

The god Marduk advances to the chaos, the deep, Tiamat (compare the Tehom of Genesis), which he pierces with his sword, dividing it into two parts:

He separates Tiamat into two parts, as one cleaves a fish:
With half he makes the covering of the sky;
He puts up bars, and stations guards,
Whom he commands not to let the Waters flow away.
He traverses the skies and overlooks space,
And prepares a dwelling place for Ea on the face of the deep.
Then Bel (the Lord) measures the immensities of space . . .

He fixes the stations of the great gods,
And opposite them he sets the constellations;

He orders the year, gives it limits,
Establishes twelve months, each with three stars . . .
He makes the god-moon to shine, and submits to it the night.

From another tablet we have the following story:

Marduk created the beasts of the field, everything that lives
in the plain;
He made the Tigris and Euphrates, and put them in their
place;
He spoke their names with pleasure.
He made the soft grass, the rushes, the trees;
The herbs of the field,
The country, the meadows,
The cow and her young, the calf, the sheep and her young,
the lamb,
The groves and the forests.

These citations are sufficient to show the resemblances
between this old Babylonian myth and the story in
Genesis.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Creation of the World. (Genesis 1, 1-2, 3. Initial
fragment of the Priests' Code.)

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the
face of the deep: and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of
the waters. And God said, Let there be light; and there was
light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divid-
ed the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day,
and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and
there was morning, one day.

And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the
waters and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God
made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under
the firmament from the waters which were above the firma-

ment: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

And God said, Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good. And God said, Let the earth put forth grass, herbs yielding seed, and fruit-trees bearing fruit after their kind, wherein is the seed thereof, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, herbs yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit, wherein is the seed thereof, after their kind: and God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a third day. And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years: and let them be for lights in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made the two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: *he made* the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.

And God said, Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created the great sea-monsters, and every living creature that moveth, wherewith the waters swarmed, after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind: and God saw that it was good. And God blessed them saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth. And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

And God said, Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind, cattle, and creeping things, and beasts of the earth after their kind: and it was so. And God made the beasts of the

earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creepeth upon the ground after its kind: and God saw that it was good. And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them: and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb yielding seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for food: and to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the heavens, and to everything that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, *I have given* every green herb for food: and it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

And the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; because that in it he rested from all his work which God had created and made.

QUESTIONS. — *How did some of the pious Jews spend their time during the Exile? — What did they do with the books they had saved? — What book was edited toward the end of the exile? — Are not traditions found among other nations very much like some of the traditions in this book?*

LESSON XXXVIII

HOPE AND FEARS

Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith Jehovah of hosts. (Malachi 3, 7.)

1. It is not certain what became of Zerubbabel. His death must have been a great disappointment to the Jews, who had counted upon this descendant of King David to re-establish their independence.

2. Their situation was becoming desperate. The Persian satraps who governed in Palestine made their authority rudely felt, and the taxes were heavy for a people who had to begin life over again. And then, the enthusiasm of the first days of the return from exile had died out, the people's faith was no longer so ardent, so real, and the difficulties in the way had checked their upward impulse.

3. Malachi the prophet, in these unhappy days, reproached the people for their want of fidelity. The priests, he said, no longer perform their duties; the commandments of the Lord are broken; the sabbath is not observed, and finally, mixed marriages, that is, marriages with women of strange nations, have become a veritable scandal.

4. At the voice of the prophet, conscience is awakened. Pious men group themselves together and form a nucleus of right living in the midst of the people, men who are determined that right shall rule, and that the honour of the God who has freed and saved them shall be re-established in the nation.

NOTE

The sixty years between the Restoration under Zerubbabel and the state of degradation described by the prophet Malachi, are covered with obscurity. What became of Zerubbabel? It has been conjectured that this prince, descendant of David, had allowed himself to be persuaded into accepting the crown, and that in an attempted rebellion against the Persian rule, he met his death. However it may be, the death of Zerubbabel brought veritable despair to the nation, who saw in it proof that any idea of the re-establishment of an independent monarchy was vain. At all events the restlessness of the Jews must explain the harshness of the Persian governors. True, the Jews, though without a king of their own, enjoyed a certain independence under the authority of their high priests, who were responsible to the Persian government; but any attempt toward freeing themselves from the Persian suzerainty, could but alienate the good-will of their masters. The disillusionments that followed the first enthusiasm of the restoration, explain the weakening of the people's faith, and the reproaches of the prophet Malachi.

BIBLE PASSAGES

(Malachi 1, 1-6.)

The burden of the word of Jehovah to Israel by Malachi. I have loved you, saith Jehovah. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith Jehovah: yet I loved Jacob; but Esau I hated, and made his mountains a desolation, and *gave* his heritage to the jackals of the wilderness. Whereas Edom saith, We are beaten down, but we will return and build the waste places; thus saith Jehovah of hosts, They

shall build, but I will throw down; and men shall call them The border of wickedness, and The people against whom Jehovah hath indignation for ever. And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, Jehovah be magnified beyond the border of Israel.

A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I am a father, where is mine honour? and if I am a master, where is my fear? saith Jehovah of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name.

Against Mixed Marriages. (Malachi 2, 10-16.)

Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, profaning the covenant of our fathers? Judah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of Jehovah which he loveth, and hath married the daughter of a foreign god. Jehovah will cut off, to the man that doeth this, him that waketh and him that answereth, out of the tents of Jacob, and him that offereth an offering unto Jehovah of hosts. And this again ye do: ye cover the altar of Jehovah with tears, with weeping, and with sighing, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, neither receiveth it with good will at your hand. Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because Jehovah hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously, though she is thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did he not make one, although he had the residue of the Spirit? And wherefore one? He sought a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For I hate putting away, saith Jehovah, the God of Israel.

QUESTIONS. — *What happened after the death of Zerubbabel? — What was the situation of the Jews? — What prophet arose to censure them? — With what did he reproach them? — Did the Jews heed his words?*

LESSON XXXIX

DECLINE OF THE PERSIAN POWER — ARRIVAL OF EZRA IN PALESTINE

The hand of our God was upon us. (Ezra 8, 31.)

1. Grave events were happening in the world, at the moment when awakening of conscience brought the unfortunate Jews of Palestine a glimmer of new hope.

2. The Persians, who had now accomplished their providential mission, were, in their turn, to show how unstable is power that rests in force of arms alone; in Greece they had just been receiving hard lessons in humility. After the death of Xerxes, who had lost the battles of Marathon and Salamis, his successor Artaxerxes I, wishing to make friends and allies, permitted a new caravan of Jews to return to Jerusalem, under the leadership of Ezra.

3. Ezra, of the race of Zadok, a priest and scribe learned in the Jewish traditions and laws, cherished the hope of rousing his people once more to the knowledge and following of this holy law that pious men had compiled and edited toward the end of the exile.

4. At the head of fifteen hundred men, he set out across the deserts, laden with gifts sent by rich Babylonian Jews, and even by Artaxerxes himself, and he arrived at Jerusalem, probably, in the month of August, 458 B.C.

NOTE

The Ionian revolt had taught the Persians that nothing is permanent here below. They had clashed with the confederate forces of Greece, and the year 490 had seen the defeat of the Persian king at Marathon. Ten years later, a new expedition undertaken by Xerxes, was checked by his defeat at Salamis (480), and at Plataea and Mycale (479), and Persia found her prestige very greatly diminished. Moreover, luxury and the love of ease had weakened the powerful race that Cyrus had once led on to victory. In the midst of these circumstances, Artaxerxes perceived the need of mollifying his Jewish subjects. Changing his policy toward them, and reversing the vexatious methods of his father, Xerxes, he loaded them with gifts, and permitted them to go on again with the work begun by Zerubbabel. So came about Ezra's expedition to Palestine.

BIBLE PASSAGE

(Ezra 7, 1-10; 8, 31-36.)

Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra the son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiyah, the son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub, the son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth, the son of Zerahiah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki, the son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest — this Ezra went up from Babylon. And he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which Jehovah, the God of Israel, had given; and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of Jehovah his God upon him. And there went up some of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinim, unto Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes king of Persia.

xerxes the king. And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. For upon the first *day* of the first month began he to go up from Babylon; and on the first *day* of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him. For Ezra had set his heart to seek the law of Jehovah, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and ordinances. . . .

Then we departed from the river Ahava on the twelfth *day* of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy and the liar-in-wait by the way. And we came to Jerusalem, and abode there three days. And on the fourth day the silver and the gold and the vessels were weighed in the house of our God into the hand of Meremoth the son of Uriah the priest (and with him was Eleazar the son of Phinehas; and with them was Jozabad the son of Jeshua, and Noadiah the son of Binnui, the Levites) — the whole by number and by weight: and all the weight was written at that time.

The children of the captivity, that were come out of exile, offered burnt-offerings unto the God of Israel, twelve bullocks for all Israel, ninety and six rams, seventy and seven lambs, twelve he-goats for a sin-offering: all this was a burnt-offering unto Jehovah. And they delivered the king's commissions unto the king's satraps, and to the governors beyond the River: and they furthered the people and the house of God.

QUESTIONS. — *What events were taking place in the world at this time? — What people checked the invasions of the Persians? — What victories were gained by the Greeks? — Who was Ezra? — What did he do?*

LESSON XL

THE STORY OF RUTH THE MOABITESS

Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.
(Ruth 1, 16.)

1. Upon his arrival at Jerusalem, Ezra's mind was at once taken up with the grave question of mixed marriages. Through a singular falling away from the teachings of their religion, many Jews, even some of the priests, had married foreign women, and these marriages were the cause of great indifference toward the religion of Yahweh.

2. The Jews were divided as to the measures that should be taken to turn aside the dangers threatened by this practice. Some of them even went so far as to claim that such marriages might have a good effect. It was very probably in defense of this last opinion that the exquisite idyl of Ruth the Moabitess was written.

3. A man of the house of Benjamin, named Elimelech, had set out, in time of famine, for the country of Moab, with his wife, Naomi, and his two sons, and had settled there. His sons married, in the strange land, Moabitish women, one of whom was called Ruth. Elimelech and both his sons died.

4. Naomi returned to her own country with Ruth, her daughter-in-law, who had not been willing to part from her; "Thy people shall be my people," Ruth said

to Naomi, "and thy God my God." The two women came to Bethlehem and dwelt in the home of Elimelech. Touched by the faithfulness of Ruth, Boaz, a relative of Elimelech's, took her for his wife, and from this union was born Obed, the grandfather of David.

NOTE

It seems to us reasonable to attribute the composition of this little book to this period of division and disturbance. Was it not natural to oppose the ideas of Ezra with this old tradition, going back to the time of the judges, and giving David, the ideal king, a daughter of Moab for his grandmother?

However this may be, it is evident that two currents of opinion divided the Jewish community. One party, alarmed by the religious indifference produced by mixed marriages, demanded radical measures; the other held that the matter was by no means so grave. The arrival of the scribe Ezra was to precipitate events.

BIBLE PASSAGE

(Ruth 1, 1-11, 13-22; 2, 1-8.)

And it came to pass in the days when the judges judged, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Beth-lehem-judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there. And Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left, and her two sons. And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelt there about ten years. And Mahlon and Chilion

died both of them; and the woman was left of her two children and of her husband.

Then she arose with her daughters-in-law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that Jehovah had visited his people in giving them bread. And she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah. And Naomi said unto her two daughters-in-law, Go, return each of you to her mother's house: Jehovah deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. Jehovah grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them and they lifted up their voice and wept. And they said unto her, Nay, but we will return with thee unto thy people. And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? have I yet sons that they may be your husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes, for the hand of Jehovah is gone forth against me. And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth clave unto her.

And she said, Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her god: return thou after thy sister-in-law. And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, and to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: Jehovah do so to me, and more also if aught but death part thee and me. And when she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, she left off speaking unto her.

So they two went until they came to Beth-lehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Beth-lehem, that all the city was moved about them, and *the women* said, Is this Naomi? And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi,* call me Mara;† for

* NAOMI, meaning PLEASANT.

† MARA, meaning BITTER.

the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and Jehovah hath brought me home again empty; why call ye me Naomi, seeing Jehovah hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me? So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, with her, who returned out of the country of Moab: and they came to Beth-lehem in the beginning of barley harvest.

And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I shall find favour. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter; And she went, and came and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on the portion of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech. And, behold, Boaz came from Beth-lehem, and said unto the reapers, Jehovah be with you. And they answered him, Jehovah bless thee. Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this? And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab: and she said, Let me glean, I pray you, and gather after the reapers among the sheaves. So she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, save that she tarried a little in the house.

Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither pass from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens.

QUESTIONS. — *What was the grave question that urged Ezra to go to Jerusalem? — Did all the people think as he did about it? — What was the opposite opinion? — Tell the story of Ruth the Moabitess?*

LESSON XLI

EZRA THE SCRIBE AND MIXED MARRIAGES

O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee. (Ezra 9, 6.)

1. But no sentimental considerations could check Ezra in his project. By all means, let this matter of mixed marriages be regulated.

2. In his memoirs, Ezra tells us of his despair at the state of affairs, and in a prayer full of feeling, he asks God to inspire his people with firm resolution. Then he decides to call together a great popular assembly.

3. This assembly of the children of Judah and Benjamin, saw the danger in marriage with women of foreign nations, and a great commission was appointed to examine into individual cases, and establish by law the measures to be followed.

4. The next year, the commission, presided over by Ezra, had finished its work, and for the time the evil seems to have been rooted out from among the people by their own will and choice.

NOTE

This change of heart among his people, after the coming of the scribe Ezra, is very interesting, showing plainly as it does, that the popular conscience had become enlightened and more exacting. The earlier reformation, those of the times of Isaiah, Hezekiah and Josiah, were inspired by the king; the impulse had come down

to the people from him; it was by his command that the people were obliged to work certain reforms. As we have seen, these attempts to better the moral and social condition of the people, did not go to very profound depths. Any reform that does not come out of the very heart of the people, is only a snare. Conversion cannot be produced to order; out of the heart must come the thrilling cry that asks aid from on high. In this undertaking of Ezra's, it is plainly to be seen that he is the mouthpiece of a whole troubled and suffering people. It is so surely the conscience of the nation speaking through Ezra, that in the assembly which appointed the commission to inquire into the individual cases of mixed marriage, only four dissenting voices were heard, while a large majority of the men present spoke heartily in favour of the scribe's project. So that this was a truly popular reform; the resolution to break with the evil was that of the nation itself.

BIBLE PASSAGES

(Ezra 9, 1-8; 10-12; 15.)

Now when these things were done, the princes drew near unto me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, *doing* according to their abominations, even of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. For they have taken of their daughters for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the peoples of the lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass. And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my robe, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down confounded. Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the

God of Israel, because of the trespass of them of the captivity; and I sat confounded until the evening oblation.

And at the evening oblation I arose up from my humiliation, even with my garment and my robe rent; and I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto Jehovah my God; and I said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God; for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our guiltiness is grown up unto the heavens. Since the days of our fathers we have been exceeding guilty unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to plunder, and to confusion of face, as it is this day. And now for a little moment grace hath been showed from Jehovah our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage.

And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy commandments, which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets, saying, The land, unto which ye go to possess it, is an unclean land through the uncleanness of the peoples of the lands: now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their prosperity for ever; that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children for ever. O Jehovah, the God of Israel, thou art righteous; for we are left a remnant that is escaped, as it is this day: behold, we are before thee in our guiltiness; for none can stand before thee because of this.

(Ezra 10, 9-17.)

Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered themselves together unto Jerusalem within the three days (it was the ninth month, on the twentieth *day* of the month); and all the people sat in the broad place before the house of God, trembling because of this matter, and for the great rain. And Ezra

the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have trespassed, and have married foreign women, to increase the guilt of Israel. Now therefore make confession unto Jehovah, the God of your fathers, and do his pleasure; and separate yourselves from the peoples of the land, and from the foreign women. Then all the assembly answered and said with a loud voice, As thou hast said concerning us, so must we do. But the people are many, and it is a time of much rain, and we are not able to stand without: neither is this a work of one day or two; for we have greatly transgressed in this matter. Let now our princes be appointed for all the assembly, and let them all that are in our cities that have married foreign women come at appointed times, and with them the elders of every city, and the judges thereof, until the fierce wrath of our God be turned from us, until this matter be despatched. Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahzeiah the son of Tikvah stood up against this *matter*: and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite helped them.

And the children of the captivity did so. And Ezra the priest, *with* certain heads of fathers' *houses*, after their fathers' houses, and all of them by their names, were set apart; and they sat down in the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter. And they made an end with all the men that had married foreign women by the first day of the first month.

QUESTIONS. — *What were Ezra's feelings when he learned how Israel had sinned? — Did he act on his own authority? — What did the assembly of the people decide? — Who carried out the people's decisions?*

LESSON XLII

NEHEMIAH AT JERUSALEM
(445 B.C.)

The God of Heaven, he will prosper us. (Nehemiah 2, 20.)

1. In the twelfth year of the reign of Artaxerxes, his cup-bearer, Nehemiah, moved by the disheartening news that came from Jerusalem, obtained permission from his master the king to visit his native city and rebuild its walls. For in spite of their good intentions, the Jews had been discouraged by the opposition of the Samaritans, and had abandoned the hope of again raising the walls.

2. Three days after his arrival, without saying anything about it to the magistrates or the priests, Nehemiah made the tour of the city, by night, on his mule, and learned the exact state of the fortifications.

3. Then he called an assembly of the people, and describing the desolation of the holy city, he appealed to the patriotism of her citizens to raise once more the crumbling walls.

4. In a burst of enthusiasm all the able-bodied men set to work, under the direction of their chief, and in the space of fifty-two days, the walls of Jerusalem were once more whole.

NOTE

The Samaritans Build a Temple at Gerizim

We have seen the attempts of the Samaritans to unite with the Jews in the reconstruction of the temple at Je-

rusalem, and the horrified Jews repulsing their offers. The Samaritans did not pardon this scorn on the part of the Jews, and at every attempt of Ezra or Nehemiah to rebuild the city, we find them intriguing to obstruct the work. But intrigue, like everything else, comes to an end. The day arrived when the Samaritans perceived that there was no hope of their ever again worshiping at Jerusalem, as Deuteronomy (the law prescribed by Josiah) commanded. They decided, therefore, to build a temple of their own to Yahweh, their God, and as the ancestral altars at Dan and Bethel had been profaned at the time of Josiah's reformation, the Samaritans chose Mount Gerizim for the site of their temple. Being near the ancient capital, Shechem, the Samaritan temple soon acquired a great importance, and posed as a rival of the temple at Jerusalem. The day was to come when Jesus Christ should point out the vanity of such divisions in the family of the children of God, and declare that the time was at hand when men should worship neither at Jerusalem nor Gerizim, for God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. This saying of Christ's is daily being realized.

Meanwhile the Samaritans did not change their belligerent attitude. Their temple was destroyed by Hyrcanus, about the year 130 B.C. The remnants of this ancient people, faithful to the party spirit that would never learn anything, still worship Yahweh on the ruins of their splendid past, at Gerizim.

BIBLE PASSAGE

(Nehemiah 2, 1-20.)

And it came to pass in the month Nisan in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, when wine was before him, that I took

up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been *before-time* sad in his presence. And the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid. And I said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire? Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it. And the king said unto me (the queen also sitting by him), For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time. Moreover, I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the River, that they may let me pass through till I come unto Judah; and a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the castle which appertaineth to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me.

Then I came to the governors beyond the River, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent with me captains of the army and horsemen. And when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly, for that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel. So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days. And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God put into my heart to do for Jerusalem; neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon. And I went out by night by the valley gate, even toward the jackal's well, and to the dung gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were

broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire. Then I went on to the fountain gate and to the king's pool: but there was no place for the beast that was under me to pass. Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall; and I turned back, and entered the valley gate, and so returned. And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did; neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work.

Then said I unto them, Ye see the evil case that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. And I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me, as also of the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for the good *work*. But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah, the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king? Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem.

QUESTIONS. — *Who came to reawaken the zeal of the sons of Judah and Benjamin? — Who was Nehemiah? — What did he undertake to do? — What success did he have?*

LESSON XLIII

EZRA AND NEHEMIAH
(444 B.C.)

The people submit to the law of God, and make a new alliance with Yahweh.

THE FOURTH REFORMATION

This day is holy unto Jehovah your God; mourn not nor weep. (Nehemiah 8, 9.)

1. We have seen that during the exile, pious men had gathered up all the old traditions of Israel, and following the ideas of the great law-giver Moses, had put into shape the laws that had been given to govern the Jewish community.

2. It now remained to bring the people to accept these laws, that were new in form, but inspired by the old spirit. The people were prepared for it; had they not responded to Ezra's appeal, and worked a change within themselves that had not been accomplished without real self devotion? Had they not listened to the counsels of Nehemiah, and raised the fallen walls of Jerusalem?

3. One step remained to be taken. Nehemiah and Ezra, after having made a numbering of the people, decided to call them together to listen to the reading of the law of God. The people responded to this appeal of their leaders, heard the reading of the law, and celebrated, according to the law's commands, the feast of Tabernacles; and then they kept a solemn fast.

4. After all this, the people made a new covenant with Yahweh, and they made oath to walk according to the commandments of the law, and no longer to tolerate marriage with foreign women; to keep holy the sabbath day, to forego the seventh year, and to free all their debtors. Finally the people charged themselves with the giving of the third part of a shekel yearly for the service of the house of God.

NOTE

This fourth reformation, the most remarkable event of the Jewish period of the history of Israel, was of the very greatest importance. It definitely transformed the Jewish *nation* into a religious community, a *church*. It did not simply put the law at the foundation of the social life of the Jews; from this time on every Jew was pledged personally, individually. Hitherto the law had been the book of the priests; it now became the book of the people. This was a veritable revolution. Gradually religion, at the heart of the community, was to become a personal affair, each man responsible to God for his deeds. Too high a place cannot be given Nehemiah in this transformation of religious thought. Yet Nehemiah did not confine himself to religious reform. The people were suffering, and the rich seemed to be without heart, without compassion. The governor took frankly the part of the poor, and sharply rebuked the rich for their inhumanity. He abolished usurious loans, and forced the lenders to restore whatever property they had taken as security. Then he gave the noblest example possible of disinterestedness, in refusing all pay for his labours

and care. During the twelve years he was governor, neither he nor his brethren lived upon "the governor's bread." Nehemiah is one of the noblest figures of Israel's history after the Captivity.

BIBLE PASSAGE

(Nehemiah 7, 73b — 8, 12.)

And when the seventh month was come, the children of Israel were in their cities. And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the broad place that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which Jehovah had commanded to Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, both men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. And he read therein before the broad place that was before the water gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women, and of those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were *attentive* unto the book of the law. And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Uriah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchijah, and Hashum, and Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people (for he was above all the people); and when he opened it, all the people stood up. And Ezra blessed Jehovah, the great God; and all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with the lifting up of their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped Jehovah with their faces to the ground. Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law; and the people *stood* in their place. And they read in the book, in

the law of God, distinctly; and they gave the sense, so that they understood the reading.

And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto Jehovah your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye grieved; for the joy of Jehovah is your strength. So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved. And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

QUESTIONS. — *What did Nehemiah do after restoring the walls of Jerusalem? — Did he impose a new law upon the people? — How did the people show their willingness to accept the proposed reforms? — What were the consequences of this reformation — the fourth since the time of Moses?*

LESSON XLIV

THE PSALTER, THE BOOK OF PSALMS OF THE SECOND TEMPLE

Oh bless our God, ye peoples, and make the voice of His praise to be heard. (Psalm 66, 8.)

1. The Psalms, that wonderful collection of sacred songs, were composed by different authors, at different times. It is almost impossible to determine precisely the names of their authors or the dates of their composition.

2. And besides, this matters little. What is absolutely certain about them is, that the five groups which form the present Psalter, were arranged at the epoch of the Restoration and the building of the second Temple. It was during the period between 444 and 140 B.C., that the Psalms were arranged as we now find them.

3. This does not mean that there are not some very old bits of poetry in these Psalms. As has been said, the Psalms are the "small change" of prophecy—they are an intense expression of the trust that the faithful should put in God. In all ages, sinful man has opened his heart to his God, and appealed to Him for aid. The Psalms are the sighing of pious hearts to the God who pardons and saves. If we are not able to determine the epoch of their composition, that does not lessen their value for us. Whether they were written by David, or Jeremiah, or even by contemporaries of Daniel, they still remain the most wonderful, the most profound, the most religious book of prayer and praise in existence.

4. This is why the songs of the second Temple are also ours; this is why we know and love these old psalms; they belong not to a particular people, but to the whole of suffering and repentant humanity.

NOTE

Among the most beautiful Psalms, we would cite Psalm 1, which is like a program of life for the pious men in Israel; Psalms 33 and 92, 1-9, to the praise of God;

Psalms **8, 19, 1-7, 104**, which celebrate the majesty of God; Psalms **90** and **102, 26-28**, on His eternity; Psalm **139**, which celebrates His omnipresence and omniscience; Psalm **103**, of His kindness. The confidence the faithful ought to have in the power, the goodness and the justice of God, is described in Psalms **23, 37, 1-6, 25, 73, 91, 121**. Psalms **42** and **85** express the desire of the soul for its God; the sinful soul bewails its sin in Psalms **51** and **130**. All the sorrows of the exiles in Babylon are expressed in Psalm **137**, and their hopes in Psalm **126**. Psalms **120-134** inclusive, are called Songs of Degrees or of Ascents.

BIBLE PASSAGES

(Psalm **86**.)*A Psalm of Supplication and Trust*

Bow down thine ear, O Jehovah, and answer me;
 For I am poor and needy.
 Preserve my soul; for I am godly:
 O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee.
 Be merciful unto me, O Lord;
 For unto thee do I cry all the day long.
 Rejoice the soul of thy servant;
 For unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.
 For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive,
 And abundant in lovingkindness unto all them that call upon thee.
 Give ear, O Jehovah, unto my prayer;
 And hearken unto the voice of my supplications.
 In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee;
 For thou wilt answer me.
 There is none like unto thee among the gods, O Lord;
 Neither *are there any works* like unto thy works.

All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord;
And they shall glorify thy name.
For thou art great, and doest wondrous things:
Thou art God alone.
Teach me thy way, O Jehovah; I will walk in thy truth:
Unite my heart to fear thy name.
I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with my whole heart;
And I will glorify thy name for evermore.
For great is thy lovingkindness toward me;
And thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest Sheol.
O God, the proud are risen up against me,
And a company of violent men have sought after my soul,
And have not set thee before them.
But thou, O Lord, art a God merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness and truth.
Oh turn unto me, and have mercy upon me;
Give thy strength unto thy servant,
And save the son of thy handmaid.
Show me a token for good,
That they who hate me may see it, and be put to shame,
Because thou, Jehovah, hast helped me, and comforted me.

(Psalm 123.)

An Expectant Prayer for Jehovah's Help

Unto thee do I lift up mine eyes,
O thou that sittest in the heavens.
Behold, as the eyes of servants *look* unto the hand of their master,
As the eyes of a maid unto the hand of her mistress,
So our eyes *look* unto Jehovah our God
Until he have mercy upon us.
Have mercy upon us, O Jehovah, have mercy upon us;
For we are exceedingly filled with contempt.

Our soul is exceedingly filled
With the scoffing of those that are at ease,
And with the contempt of the proud.

(Psalm 130.)

Hope in the Lord's Forgiving Love

Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Jehovah.
Lord hear my voice:
Let thine ears be attentive
To the voice of my supplications.
If thou, Jehovah, shouldest mark iniquities,
O Lord, who could stand?
But there is forgiveness with thee,
That thou mayest be feared.
I wait for Jehovah, my soul doth wait,
And in his word do I hope.
My soul *waiteth* for the Lord
More than watchmen *wait* for the morning;
Yea, *more than* watchmen for the morning.
O Israel, hope in Jehovah;
For with Jehovah there is lovingkindness,
And with him is plenteous redemption.
And he will redeem Israel
From all iniquities.

QUESTIONS. — *What is the Psalter? — Do we know
who wrote it? — Into how many parts is it divided? —
Is it still of interest and value to us?*

LESSON XLV

JONAH

(Close of the Fourth Century B.C.)

Thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness. (Jonah 4, 2.)

1. Toward the end of the fourth century before Christ, the Jews, who on account of their sins had had so much to suffer from strange nations, had come to believe pretty generally that these nations had no share in the kingdom of God.

2. In protesting against this narrow view, an unknown author wrote the story of Jonah. Jonah is commanded to go preach repentance to the Ninevites; he refuses, and takes ship to flee from God's order. A tempest arises, and he is cast into the sea.

3. God wishes him to be saved, and for this purpose "Jehovah prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights."

4. "And Jehovah spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land." After this lesson, Jonah preached repentance to the Ninevites, and the Ninevites turned from their evil ways.

NOTE

It is well known what unbelievers have made of this story, which is plainly not history, but only a parable. With what confidence have they not reproached relig-

ious men with the famous "whale" of Jonah — which, in truth, is not to be found in the Bible text! Now though the name of Jonah son of Amitai occurs in the historical books of the Old Testament (2 Kings 14, 25), it is evident that in this case we have a tale with a moral, an allegory. The book is a protest against the exclusiveness of that party in Israel which was later to become the Pharisees; its purpose is to show that the heathen themselves could repent and be pardoned. The incident of the great fish can no more be taken literally than can the parables of Jesus.

BIBLE PASSAGE

(Jonah 1, 13 — 2, 11.)

The men rowed hard to get them back to land; but they could not: for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. Wherefore they cried unto Jehovah, and said, We beseech thee, O Jehovah, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood; for thou, O Jehovah, hast done as it pleased thee. So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared Jehovah exceedingly; and they offered a sacrifice unto Jehovah, and made vows.

And Jehovah prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Then Jonah prayed unto Jehovah his God out of the fish's belly. And he said,

I called by reason of mine affliction unto Jehovah,

And he answered me;

Out of the belly of Sheol cried I,

And thou heardest my voice.

For thou didst cast me into the depth, in the heart of the seas,

And the flood was round about me;

All thy waves and thy billows passed over me.

And I said, I am cast out from before thine eyes;
Yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.
The waters compassed me about, even to the soul;
The deep was round about me;
The weeds were wrapped about my head.
I went down to the bottoms of the mountains;
The earth with its bars *closed* upon me for ever:
Yet hast thou brought up my life from the pit, O Jehovah
my God.

When my soul fainted within me, I remembered Jehovah;
And my prayer came in unto thee, into thy holy temple.
They that regard lying vanities
Forsake their own mercy.
But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving;
I will pay that which I have vowed.
Salvation is of Jehovah.

And Jehovah spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah
upon the dry land.

QUESTIONS. — *What is the meaning of the book of Jonah? — Should the book be taken literally? — Tell the story of Jonah. — What is God's will for the heathen?*

LESSON XLVI

THE JEWS UNDER GRECIAN RULE

Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength. (Ecclesiastes 9, 16.)

1. The empire of the Persians had fallen, under the onslaughts of Alexander the Great, in 333 B.C. The Jews, after having already very often changed masters, now found themselves subjects of the Macedonian conqueror.

2. At the death of Alexander, in the year 323 B.C., the empire that he had established was divided among his generals. Egypt fell to the lot of the Ptolemies and their dynasty; Syria and its dependencies became a very extensive empire under Seleucus and his successors, the Seleucidæ. For a hundred years, the Jews were tributary to the Ptolemies.

3. The influence of Greek thought on Jewish ideas was very considerable; we find traces of it even in some books of the Bible that were written in Hebrew.

4. But the Jews of the dispensation, those who lived in Asia Minor, Syria and Egypt, were the ones most influenced by Greek thought and customs.

NOTE

At all times, even when we recognize the Israelites as very specially the agents of the revelation of the God of justice and holiness, it is easy to find traces of foreign influence in their manners and customs. We have already pointed out the transformations that the old Babylonian myths underwent in passing through the Jewish mind; and it cannot be denied that certain speculations which have made their way down the ages through Judaism, come to us not untinged by the contact of the Jews of the Exile with Babylonian mythology. Nor let us forget that the religions of the Phœnicians were a danger to the Israelites. Under the Grecian rule, Judaism underwent a veritable transformation; and in this transformation we see again the hand of God. In the plan of God, Judaism must expand in the presence of Greek thought, in con-

tact with Greek philosophy, in order that when Jesus Christ should come, the preaching of the good tidings might become general. The Jewish spirit, moulded and disciplined for ages, that it might give its God to the world, must pass through this final discipline of contact with the Greek mind, before it could comprehend the fundamental doctrine of God, summed up in these words: *the Word became flesh*.

BIBLE PASSAGES

(Ecclesiastes 1, 1-18.)

The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; vanity of vanities, all is vanity. What profit hath man of all his labour wherein he laboureth under the sun? One generation goeth, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth for ever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to its place where it ariseth. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it turneth about continually in its course, and the wind returneth again to its circuits. All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; unto the place whither the rivers go, thither they go again. All things are full of weariness; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. That which hath been is that which shall be; and that which hath been done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there a thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been long ago, in the ages which were before us. There is no remembrance of the former *generations*; neither shall there be any remembrance of the latter *generations* that are to come, among those that shall come after.

I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom concerning

all that is done under heaven: it is a sore travail that God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised therewith. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind. That which is crooked cannot be made straight; and that which is wanting cannot be numbered. I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I have gotten me great wisdom above all that were before me in Jerusalem; yea, my heart hath had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also was a striving after wind. For in much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.

(Ecclesiastes 12, 9-13.)

And further, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he pondered, and sought out, *and* set in order many proverbs. The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words, and that which was written uprightly, *even* words of truth.

The words of the wise are as goads; and as nails well fastened are *the words* of the masters of assemblies, *which* are given from one shepherd. And furthermore, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

This is the end of the matter; all hath been heard: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole *duty* of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

QUESTIONS. — *Who succeeded the Persians in the empire of the world? — Then whose subjects did the Jews become? — Were they influenced by the Greeks? — Was this influence for their good?*

LESSON XLVII

THE PERSECUTION OF ANTIOCHUS

(169 B.C.)

Thine adversaries have roared in the midst of thine assembly. They have set up their ensigns for signs. (Psalm 74, 4.)

1. Where their new masters were concerned, the Jews had little cause for dissatisfaction. They were given every liberty, and, so far, the Grecian kings had shown themselves tolerant toward the religious beliefs of the peoples brought under their authority.

2. Unfortunately, in Jerusalem, two great parties were disputing with each other for power; one, made up of pious men, faithful to the religion of Yahweh, practised their worship in its purity, keeping themselves from all contact with pagan ways; but the other, intoxicated with new ideas, strove to follow the Greeks in everything. Those of the first party guarded their ancient customs and national names with jealous care; the others hellenized their names, wore the Greek dress, and followed the customs of their masters.

3. These imitators of the Greek civilization had so great an influence, that they had been able to raise to the office of high priest, a man named Jesus, brother of the high priest Onias III, and according to the fashion of his party, he had changed his name to Jason, Then followed a period of unrest and revolt, which brought to Jerusa-

lem Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria, who was returning from an expedition against Egypt.

4. Antiochus certainly more than fulfilled the wishes of the hellenized Jews. He decided to suppress the Jewish religion altogether, to strip the Temple of its sacred vessels and ornaments, and to transform it into a Temple of Jupiter Olympus.

NOTE

This persecution by Antiochus, remarkable and almost unique — for the pagan world was, in general, very tolerant — merits our attention.

The king issued an ordinance to the effect that there should be but one people and one religion in his realm. This action was evidently for political ends. In him we find an ancestor of Louis XIV, and if we read attentively the first chapter of the first book of the Maccabees, we are astonished to see how alike are the actions of tyrants. The measures Antiochus took against the Jews, correspond to the decrees of Louis against the heretics; they were the suppression of public worship, the abrogation of ritual laws, and prohibition to obey laws peculiar to themselves, such as that against the eating of pork. And all those who failed to conform to the king's orders, must die. Upon the altar of the Temple of God, Antiochus erected a statue of Jupiter, "the abomination of desolation," and throughout the cities of Judah idols and statues of the gods were set up.

A terrible persecution followed. The women who permitted their children to be circumcised were put to death, and their children were hanged about their necks;

their houses were razed to the ground, and those who had performed the rite were slain. If there were apostates — and they were numerous — nevertheless a great number of the Jews resisted the king's commands, preferring to die rather than to abandon the religion of their fathers. It was a time of great desolation among the children of Israel.

BIBLE PASSAGE

(Psalm 74; belonging to the epoch of the persecution.)

*A Complaint over the Devastation of the Land
by the Enemy*

O God, why hast thou cast *us* off forever?
Why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?
Remember thy congregation, which thou hast gotten of old,
Which thou hast redeemed to be the tribe of thine inheritance;
And mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt.
Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual ruins,
All the evil that the enemy hath done in the sanctuary.
Thine adversaries have roared in the midst of thine assembly;
They have set up their ensigns for signs.
They seemed as men that lifted up
Axes upon a thicket of trees.
And now all the carved work thereof
They break down with hatchet and hammers.
They have set thy sanctuary on fire;
They have profaned the dwelling-place of thy name *by casting*
it to the ground.
They said in their heart, Let us make havoc of them altogether:
They have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land.
We see not our signs:
There is no more any prophet;
Neither is there among us any that knoweth how long.

How long, O God, shall the adversary reproach?
Shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?
Why drawest thou back thy hand, even thy right hand?
Pluck it out of thy bosom and consume them.

Yet God is my King of old,
Working salvation in the midst of the earth.
Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength:
Thou brakest the heads of the sea-monsters in the waters.
Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces;
Thou gavest him to be food to the people inhabiting the wilderness.
Thou didst cleave fountain and flood:
Thou driedst up mighty rivers.
The day is thine, the night also is thine:
Thou hast prepared the light and the sun.
Thou hast set all the borders of the earth:
Thou hast made summer and winter.
Remember this, that the enemy hath reproached, O Jehovah,
And that a foolish people hath blasphemed thy name.
Oh deliver not the soul of thy turtle-dove unto the wild beast:
Forget not the life of thy poor for ever.
Have respect unto the covenant;
For the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of violence.
Oh let not the oppressed return ashamed:
Let the poor and needy praise thy name.
Arise, O God, plead thine own cause:
Remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee all the day.
Forget not the voice of thine adversaries:
The tumult of those that rise up against thee ascendeth continually.

QUESTIONS. — *What was the condition of the Jews under Grecian rule? — Did they adopt the Greek customs?*

—What was the result?—Who was Antiochus?—
 What did he do?—Was this persecution unusual?—
 Of what does it remind us?

LESSON XLVIII

THE REBELLION OF THE MACCABEES
(167 B.C.)

And Mattathias answered and spake with a loud voice, Though all the nations that are in the king's realm obey him . . . and have accepted for themselves his commandments, yet will I and my sons and my brethren walk in the covenant of our fathers. (1 Maccabees 2, 19-20.)

1. A few hours' journey to the west of Jerusalem, was the little hamlet of Modin. There Mattathias lived, with his numerous family. He was an upright priest, devoted to his religion, who had taken no part in the apostasy of his brothers.

2. The officers of Antiochus came to Modin to force its inhabitants to submit to the royal decree. In the presence of all the people, Mattathias refused to abandon his God.

3. At that moment a Jew approached the altar to sacrifice to the gods, and Mattathias, filled with holy wrath, killed both him and the king's officer. Then, forsaking his home, he fled to the mountains, with his sons and other faithful Jews.

4. This was the origin of the revolt of the Maccabees. In answer to their appeal, the Jews came to them from

all sides, determined to defend their faith and their national traditions. After an heroic struggle, the son of Mattathias, Judas Maccabeus, vanquished the tyrant, purified Jerusalem, and gave back to the Jews their spiritual freedom.

NOTES

This revolt of the Maccabees, is like the sudden eruption of a volcano. All at once, in a village far from Jerusalem, the popular conscience, incarnate in the passion of the priest Mattathias, is roused, and all the oppressed range themselves with the heroic Asmonean. The pious men, their wives and their children, their flocks and their herds, take refuge in the mountains that David had once frequented with his bands. There they organize and equip themselves, and thence give battle to the Syrian troops. Judas Maccabeus succeeded his father. "He was a veritable warrior, with a courage at once cool and daring, as devoted to his cause as a fanatic, quite devoid, it would seem, of personal ambition. . . . Judas Maccabeus took no part in politics; . . . he was content to conquer and get himself killed. All honour to Judas! Judas is a saint; he has the qualities and the defects of the kind of greatness that is created by faith, a greatness surpassing in devotion anything to which pure reason can attain." — (Renan.)

The family of the Maccabees, perfectly united, strong in faith and disinterestedness, could nevertheless give to the people no more than a passing freedom; for these first Asmoneans, with their devotion, their faith and their austerity, were succeeded by men of personal ambition, who hastened on the Roman invasion of Pales-

time. With that invasion, every hope of national independence for the Jews disappeared; the strong hand of Rome proceeded to re-establish order, in Roman fashion. The time was at hand when Israel should no longer be aught but the missionary of the Idea; it was about to give to the world the supreme revelation of God the Father; already the world was ripe for its Deliverer, its Saviour.

In history the Maccabees (*makkebet*, a hammer; the hammer of God), bear the name of Asmoneans, from an ancestor of Mattathias, who, according to the historian Josephus, was called Asamoniaios. The etymology just given for the word Maccabeus, is far from being generally accepted. Some people have tried to see in the name the initial letters of the watchword of the party of Judas (Exodus 15, 11: *mî kamocha bælim Yahweh*, "Who is like unto thee, O Jehovah, among the Gods?"). Whatever the case, if we accept the origin *makkebet*, we find sufficient reason in the fact that Judas crushed as with a hammer his enemies and the enemies of Yahweh (compare *Charles Martel*).

BIBLE PASSAGE

(1 Maccabees 2, 1-7, 14-30.)

In those days arose Mattathias the son of John, the son of Simeon, a priest of the sons of Joarib, from Jerusalem, and dwelt in Modin. And he had five sons, Joannan, called Caddis: Simon called Thassi: Judas, who was called Maccabeus: Eleazar, called Avaran: and Jonathan, whose surname was Apphus.

And when he saw the blasphemies that were committed in Juda and Jerusalem, he said, Woe is me! wherefore was I born to see this misery of my people, and of the holy city, and to

dwelt there, when it was delivered into the hand of the enemy, and the sanctuary into the hands of strangers? . . .

Then Mattathias and his sons rent their clothes, and put on sackcloth, and mourned very sore. In the meanwhile the king's officers, such as compelled the people to revolt, came into the city, Modin, to make them sacrifice. And when many of Israel came unto them, Mattathias also and his sons came together. Then answered the king's officers, and said to Mattathias on this wise, Thou art a ruler, and an honourable and great man in this city, and strengthened with sons and brethren: now, therefore, come thou first, and fulfil the king's commandment, like as all the heathen have done, yea, and the men of Juda also, and such as remain at Jerusalem: so shalt thou and thy house be in the number of the king's friends, and thou and thy children shall be honoured with silver and gold, and many rewards.

Then Mattathias answered and spake with a loud voice, Though all the nations that are under the king's dominion obey him, and fall away every one from the religion of their fathers, and give consent to his commandments: yet, will I and my sons and my brethren walk in the covenant of our fathers. God forbid that we should forsake the law and the ordinances. We will not hearken to the king's words, to go from our religion, either on the right hand or the left.

Now, when he had left speaking these words, there came one of the Jews in the sight of all to sacrifice on the altar which was at Modin, according to the king's commandment. Which thing when Mattathias saw, he was inflamed with zeal, and his reins trembled, neither could he forbear to shew his anger according to judgment: wherefore he ran, and slew him upon the altar. Also the king's commissioner, who compelled men to sacrifice, he killed at that time, and the altar he pulled down. Thus dealt he zealously for the law of God, like as Phinees did unto Zambri the son of Salom. And Mattathias cried throughout the city with a loud voice, saying, Whoever is zealous of the law.

and maintaineth the covenant, let him follow me. So he and his sons fled into the mountains, and left all that ever they had in the city. Then many that sought after justice and judgment went down into the wilderness, to dwell there: both they, and their children, and their wives, and their cattle; because afflictions increased sore upon them.

QUESTIONS. — *What was the name of the priest living at Modin? — What happened in the village? — Did Mattathias obey the king's commands? — When he saw a Jew about to sacrifice to idols, what did he do? — What were the consequences of his act?*

LESSON XLIX

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

(164 B.C.)

Behold there came with the clouds of Heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. (Daniel 7, 13-14.)

1. In these troublous days, those who were not fighting were praying and composing psalms; was there not need of encouraging the heroic defenders of the faith, of sustaining them by supplications in their behalf; of giving them assurance that God was with them?

2. Under these circumstances, the book of Daniel

was composed. Made up of narratives and visions, it aims to show that the day of punishment for the evil-doer is near and that God is watching over the nations.

3. Great empires have succeeded one another. Full of violence, and trusting in their own strength alone, they have fallen one after another, because, says the Good Book, God gives the empire of the world to whom He will; empires and men alike are in His hands.

4. And afterward will come the judgment. To these empires will succeed the eternal kingdom of the people of the most High, a kingdom which shall be to those preceding it what a man is in comparison with a beast of prey. That will be the kingdom of humanity and justice, the Kingdom of God.

NOTES

1. The book of Daniel, which the translators have mistakenly grouped with the prophets, — in the Hebrew Bibles it is classed in the third category of sacred books, among the hagiographa or *writings*, — is the first of a series called apocalypses. The apocalypse (from a Greek word signifying *revelation*) resembles no other form of literary production. In a succession of highly enigmatic visions and pictures, its author depicts past ages, and judges the present; from design, he involves his words in an obscurity which does not fail to make extremely difficult the comprehension of his work. This aside, the Apocalypse of Daniel traces in lines of fire the picture of the horrors — the “abomination of deso-

lation" — through which the faithful must pass in these critical days. But its assurance that God will re-establish everything is so great, that it communicates itself irresistibly. The book must have re-inspired the unhappy nation, a victim to the will of Antiochus. It may be called the announcement of that great day soon to dawn for humanity in the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ.

One characteristic of the apocalypses is that they are anonymous; they borrow the name of some great man of God in the past, and with profound humility, their author hides behind this great name. This happened in the case of the book of Daniel. According to the most careful calculations, it must have been composed either at the end of the year 165, or, more probably, at the beginning of the year 164 B.C.

BIBLE PASSAGE

(Daniel 11, 21-35.)

And in his place shall stand up a contemptible person, to whom they have not given the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in a time of security, and shall obtain the kingdom by flatteries. And the overwhelming forces shall be overwhelmed from before him, and shall be broken; yea, also the prince of the covenant. And after the league made with him he shall work deceitfully; for he shall come up, and shall become strong, with a small people. In time of security shall he come even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers; he shall scatter among them prey, and spoil, and substance: yea, he shall devise his devices against the strongholds, even for a time. And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army; and the king of the south shall war in battle with an exceeding great and mighty army; but he shall

not stand; for they shall devise devices against him. Yea, they that eat of his dainties shall destroy him, and his army shall overflow; and many shall fall down slain. And as for both these kings, their hearts shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table: but it shall not prosper; for yet the end shall be at the time appointed.

Then shall he return into his land with great substance; and his heart *shall be* against the holy covenant; and he shall do *his pleasure*, and return to his own land. At the time appointed he shall return, and come into the south; but it shall not be in the latter time as it was in the former. For ships of Kittim shall come against him; therefore he shall be grieved, and shall return, and have indignation against the holy covenant, and shall do *his pleasure*: he shall even return, and have regard unto them that forsake the holy covenant. And forces shall stand on his part, and they shall profane the sanctuary, even the fortress, and shall take away the continual *burnt-offering*, and they shall set up the abomination that maketh desolate. And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he pervert by flatteries; but the people that know their God shall be strong, and do *exploits*. And they that are wise among the people shall instruct many; yet they shall fall by the sword and by flame, by captivity and by spoil, *many* days. Now when they shall fall, they shall be helped with a little help; but many shall join themselves unto them with flatteries. And some of them that are wise shall fall, to refine them, and to purify, and to make them white, even to the time of the end; because it is yet for the time appointed.

QUESTIONS. — *What did the pious Jews who were not fighting do at this time? — What do you know about the book of Daniel? — What is the class of literature to which it belongs called? — At about what time was the book written?*

LESSON L

POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS PARTIES AT THE TIME OF THE COMING OF CHRIST

Then spake Jesus to the multitude and to his disciples, saying, the Scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; all things, therefore, whatsoever they bid you do, these do and observe : but do not ye after their works ; for they say, and do not. Yea, they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders ; but they themselves will not move them with their finger. (Matthew 23, 2-4.)

1. The time is at hand; Jesus is about to appear. The world is under the authority of the Romans, and the Jews, who have already had so many masters, now make a part of the great Roman Empire. What attitude do they take ? Some of them, the Sadducees, are resigned to their fate, and do not hesitate to enter into the life of their conquerors; others, the Pharisees, keep up a silent opposition; still others, the Essenes, seek to carry out their ideas by returning to a communal life in the desert, while the scribes or doctors of the law, wander about the country, reading and explaining the Law.

2. *The Pharisees*, from the Hebrew word *parash*, meaning *separate*, are the national party; they wish to keep untouched their law and all the traditions of their people. But by the inconsistencies of their own lives, they make it plain that man cannot be saved by the law. They have a horror of being governed by foreigners.

3. *The Sadducees*, the aristocratic and priestly party (perhaps from *Zadok*, one of their leaders), lived on good terms with the Romans, and so were in security. They rejected all the traditions, and contented themselves with preserving the Scriptures. They did not believe in the immortality of the soul, as did the Pharisees.

4. Finally, the *Essenes* were rather a religious order than a party. They lived far from the cities, possessed everything in common, and gave themselves exclusively to agriculture. While the Scribes, the Pharisees and the Sadducees are very often mentioned in the New Testament, we find in it not the slightest reference to the Essenes.

NOTE

The Gospels represent the Pharisees as the most hypocritical of men, to such a point that even to-day, to say of a man that his deeds are not in accord with his words, we call him a Pharisee. Certainly, at the time of Jesus, by the very force of things, the Pharisees had reduced religion to nothing but a form. Through the love of routine and the abuse of petty distinctions, they had become like sepulchres, beautiful without, but within, full of dead men's bones. The letter of the law had killed its spirit. Yet the Pharisees were none other than the descendants of those pure and pious men who had restored Israel, rebuilt the Temple, re-established the worship of their fathers, proclaimed the law holy, and fought, even to the point of laying down their lives, against the encroachments of the outside world; and it

was they who ran together at the voice of Mattathias and Judas Maccabeus. What a lesson for us! For they were condemned, stigmatized by Jesus Christ. Let us remember that the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

And since we have arrived at the end of this history of the people of God, which now makes way for the advent of Jesus Christ, let us turn to Him who alone hath the words of eternal life, to Him who is the way, the truth and the life.

BIBLE PASSAGES

(Matthew 16, 1-12.)

And the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and trying him asked him to show them a sign from heaven. But he answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, *It will be fair weather*: for the heaven is red. And in the morning *It will be foul weather to-day*: for the heaven is red and lowering. Ye know how to discern the face of the heaven; but ye cannot *discern* the signs of the times. An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of Jonah. And he left them, and departed.

And the disciples came to the other side and forgot to take bread. And Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. And they reasoned among themselves, saying. We took no bread. And Jesus perceiving it said, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have no bread? Do ye not yet perceive, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? How is it that ye do not perceive that I spake not to you concerning bread? But beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Then understood they that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

(Matthew 23, 27-33.)

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear beautiful, but inwardly are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but inwardly ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

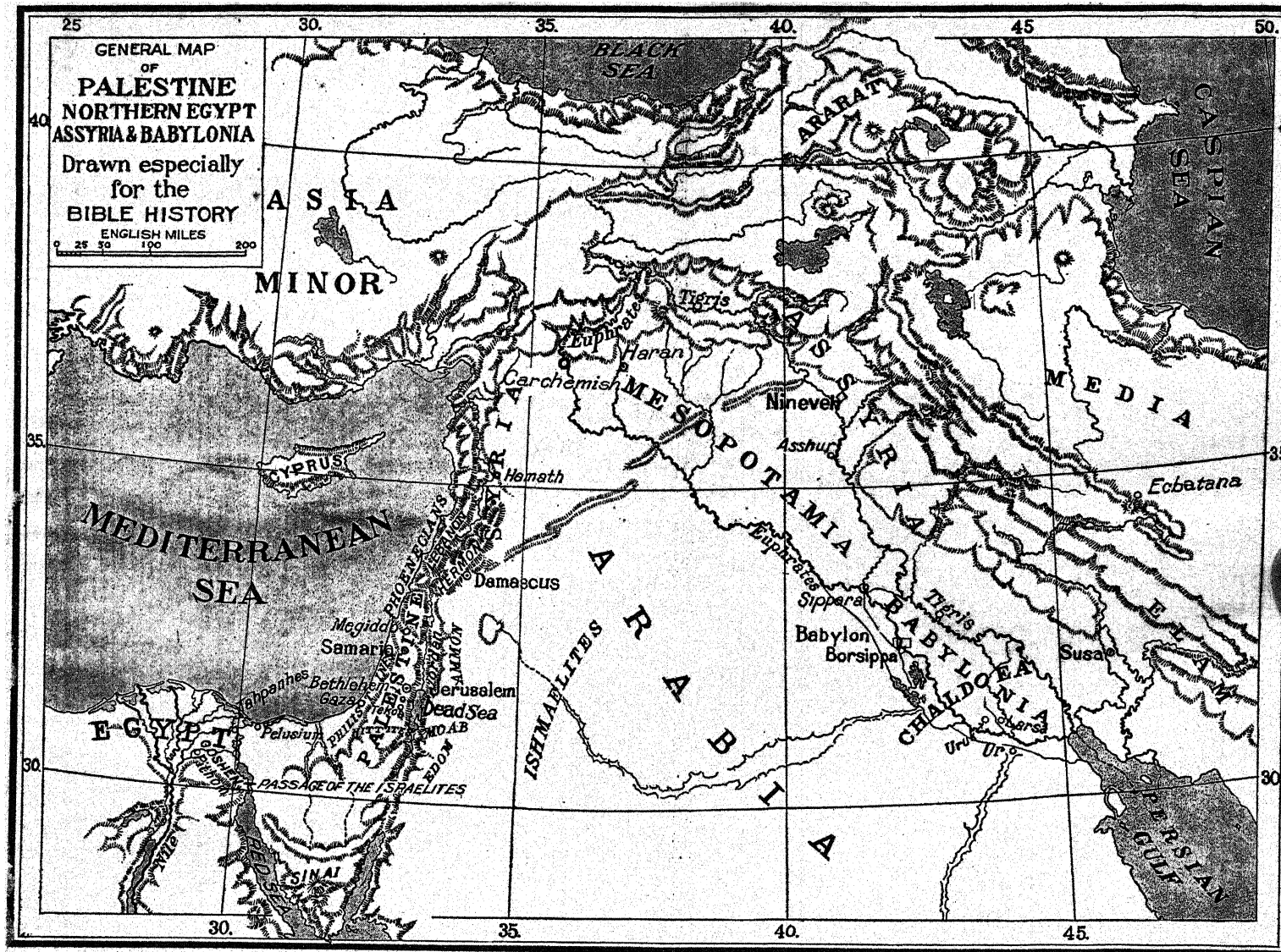
Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and garnish the tombs of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we should not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye witness to yourselves, that ye are sons of them that slew the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.

QUESTIONS. — *What nation ruled in Palestine at the time of Jesus Christ? — What were the parties that divided the Jews? — Who were the Pharisees? — The Sadducees? — The Essenes?*

THE END

Drawn especially
for the
BIBLE HISTORY

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